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ABSTRACT

Four issues of a University of California, Los Angeles, (UCLA) newsletter by and for teaching assistants (TAs) are presented, with focus on writing, grading, undergraduate instruction, and plagiarism. Topics include: making writing assignments that are clear and provide clear grading criteria; writing with computers, writing by scientists and technologists, writing historical essays, principles for good essay and paper topics, peer group editing, presentation guidelines for written work, punctuation, the passive voice, ways to perpetuate either poor or good writing among students, common myths about writing, teaching reading for writing, correcting student writing, differing conceptions of grading, grade inflation, grading on a curve, in-process evaluations, bad lecturing, the quality of undergraduate instruction, the state of teaching in the humanities, characteristics of excellent teachers, attitudes of today's freshmen, plagiarism in the classroom, preventing cheating on exams, why college students cheat, policies and procedures on cheating at the University of California at Los Angeles, and selling term papers. (SW)

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The materials in the Special Collection on the Training of Teaching Assistants were developed through the active efforts of numerous educators who first met at the 1986 National Conference on the Institutional Responsibilities and Responses in the Employment and Education of Teaching Assistants held at the Ohio State University. Assisted by more than 80 individuals, the committee chairs listed below were able to establish the collection which will be developed and maintained by the ERIC Clearinghouse for Higher Education. This arrangement will enable faculty members, faculty developers, administrators, TA supervisors, and graduate teaching assistants to have access to TA training materials produced by institutions across the nation.

Task Force on Establishing a National Clearinghouse of Materials Developed for TA Training

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The TA at UCLA Newsletter

Fall 1984
#12

Prophylactic Assignments

A pedagogical parable:

Once upon a time last year, two TAs led the discussion sections for an overenrolled biology course. The professor required research papers from all students, and naturally the responsibility for assigning and evaluating the essays fell upon our heroes. As we have said, the TAs had divided the horde of underclassmen as Moses the Red Sea, but even so, as the first TA scanned the vast expanse of his discussion section, he perceived that there were far too many students in his charge considering how much work of his own had to be completed that quarter. Remembering to look out for number one, knowing how many grinding hours of grading lay ahead, this TA decided to waste no more time than necessary. Accordingly, he rose up before his charges and proclaimed, "Write a four-to-five-page library paper on something we're studying this quarter. Due tenth week." And having spoken, he returned to his research.

The second TA, a wily and worldly-wise herpetologist, equally dismayed by the overload of undergraduates, also remembered to look out for number one. And so, biting down hard on his test tube holder (no bullets being available) he dittoed an assignment sheet for his students. The sheet not only established the assignment's parameters (including sample topics) but also explained the desired format for papers and the TA's criteria for grading. After distributing this detailed assignment sheet and setting aside class time to solicit questions concerning it, the second TA returned to his research.

Came the tenth week and the flood of papers. Ironically, the first TA had to spend fully half again as much time wading through essays as the second TA did. In fact, the first TA almost drowned in the deluge of formless, sloppily written, undocumented essays, each on a different, often poorly defined topic. The second TA received better focused, more conscientiously written essays — and far fewer unwelcome surprises. His students had known what was expected of them. Odds are that this partially accounted for the second TA's higher student evaluation scores.

The moral: any TA can influence the quality of student writing merely by the care he or she takes in making assignments. Here are some suggestions for assignments which will prevent an epidemic of unreadable prose.

I. Before you make the first assignment:
   a. Establish a clear policy concerning due dates and late papers.
   b. Point out to your students that they are writing for an audience, not merely for self-expression; that is, grades will be awarded purely on the basis of what is down on paper, not what is reputedly in their heads. Inform students that they will profit from rereading their essays to make sure that they have covered the material thoroughly and presented it clearly. You, too, will profit.
   c. Explain plagiarism and specify the sort of documentation you require on take-home papers.

II. Making the assignment:
   a. Effective assignments possess two cardinal virtues: clarity and specificity. In large classes or exam situations especially, any ambiguity will be exploited, any conceivable wrong turn taken. Establish firm, detailed guidelines for both the content and the format of the essays.

Forty students, discussing their worst assignments ever, agreed unanimously that nothing proves more disheartening, or more irritating, than a vague assignment. Accordingly, time spent clarifying an assignment ultimately saves time in two ways. It reduces the percentage of tangent-riding, superfluous and confusing prose you will be confronting; few tasks consume more time than hacking through a "birdshot-and-kitchen-sink" essay trying to locate correct

in this issue:
WRITING

TA #1

TA #2

answers in the verbal underbrush. Unambiguous assignments also save angry office hours spent justifying a "D" to the student who responded to your question on theories of mass extinction with five hundred words on the decline of Catholicism.

Two corollaries for take-home assignments: 1) set aside class time to discuss assignments -- encourage questions and answer them sympathetically; 2) type all assignments, ditto/xerox and distribute them, because oral assignments invite chaos.

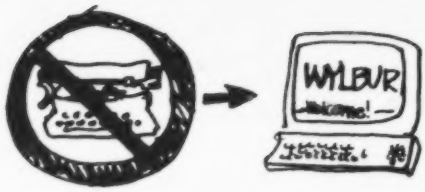
b. Make grading criteria explicit in advance. Few people like working in the dark. For that matter, not everyone likes working; many students periodically need to be informed that conscientiousness is worth their while. If you want well-organized essays, announce that you will take organization into account when grading. This may be the surest way of combating academic entropy. And when students talk about their worst writing experiences, they rank murky grading standards up there with vague or misleading assignments as a major cause of dissatisfaction. The clearer the standards, the less student confusion and resentment, the fewer office hour showdowns.

And most importantly, the better the papers.

Michael Moore,
Writing Programs

Writing with Computers

One crucial step toward writing well is to undertake writing as a process; in practical terms, this includes doing several drafts of any serious work. The pain of producing a series of drafts can be assuaged by use of a computer for word processing. Your students may have access to one or more systems.



Wylbur is a word-processing program that runs on the campus mainframe computer (the IBM 3033). Though Wylbur is a rather complex program, students can quickly achieve enough mastery to revise papers on the system and avoid retyping. Some will have used the system previously in writing classes.

A videotape to help users get started is available in Powell 290 ("Using Wylbur: A Visual Introduction"), and an inexpensive Learner's Guide is on sale at the bookstore. Terminals are housed in GSM and in Math Sciences.

Wylbur accounts are administered by the Office of Academic Computing, whose User Relations Office is in Math Sciences 4302. Before applying for an account, check with your department to see about funding and previous department use.

THE HOME FRONT

Unbelievably, students continue to inquire if, instead of banging out papers on an antiquated manual typewriter, it's OK to use a $10,000 word processor to which they fortuitously have access. Home computers are, of course, becoming increasingly common; encourage their use, even at the cost of having to read dot-matrix printing. The decrease in typos alonely will reword your effforts.

WANDAH

The most exciting computer news is the arrival of WANDAH and a computer writing lab to support the program. WANDAH is an easy-to-learn program, developed at UCLA, that helps student writers with all stages of the writing process, from freewriting and organization to review for mechanics and style.

At the heart of WANDAH -- if programs have hearts -- is a word processor that defies students to get confused or destroy their work, as occasionally happens with less friendly systems. For example, when the user wants to erase a paper, WANDAH displays the beginning of the paper and requires confirmation of the deletion. Another notable feature is WANDAH's split-screen capability, which allows the student to look at an outline on the top of the screen while entering or editing text on the bottom.

The program was tested in Winter quarter 1984 with enthusiastic results from beginning, intermediate, and advanced writing classes, but unfortunately it is not yet available campus-wide. In 1984-85 a WANDAH writing lab will be a key component in the Freshman Preparatory Program.

WANDAH was funded by a grant from the EXXON Education Foundation. Working on the project were Morton Friedman and Earl Rand (Principal Investigators), Ruth Von Blum (Project Director), Michael Cohen (Principal Programmer), and Lisa Gerrard (Design Consultant).

Robert Cullen,
Writing Programs

Faculty Across the Disciplines Hold Ideas in Common

Recently the UCLA Conference on Writing and the Undergraduate Curriculum brought together 82 faculty members from 19 departments to discuss our own writing and the writing assignments we design for our students. We learned that while our understanding of writing is different from students', we share many similar views across the disciplines. Students usually see writing as a monologue and as a test, since they write for an intimidating audience, the teacher-examiner. Faculty, on the other hand, view writing as a constructive intellectual tool, and even from the earliest stages of our work we project a community of scholars who share our interests. Most want -- and ask for -- feedback from several readers. At the heart of the enterprise are inquiry and conversation. We have complex relationships with scholars and texts, traditions and movements. We play voices against voices, assessing others' conclusions, talking to ourselves and to those we admire and to those we wish to correct. Our audiences, while collegial, are tough and hard-hitting.

How can we extrapolate from our experience to provide comparable writing opportunities for students? Participants offer several suggestions:

1) Collaborative projects involving several stages of inter- and intra-group reporting, with a co-authoring of final papers.

2) Assignments that simulate the series of activities associated with a field. For example, students take on the role of researcher/observer, keeping logs, reporting findings, making progress reports.

3) Highly structured assignments with several stages built into them. These may "free" the student to write and think because they offer enough cognitive and rhetorical cues to break the

student's dependence on instructors. In-class essay exams may simply deny the revising and elaborating stages that we need to support and force thinking in our own projects, and may be one source of students' negative attitude toward writing.

--Gary Colombo and Ellen Quandahl,
Writing Programs

R & D and ABCs

Should scientists and technologists worry about writing? Yes, indeed, according to Donald D. Phillips, General Manager of Research and Development, Mobil Chemical Company, who had this to say in a letter to Professor Orville L. Chapman of UCLA's Department of Chemistry:

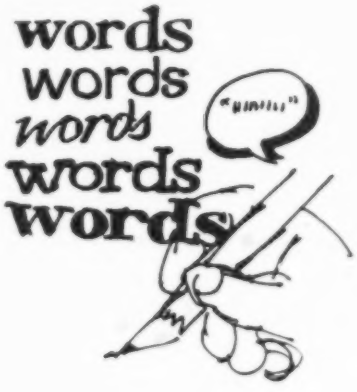
Dear Orville:

Some time ago you asked me to put down in a letter to you some of my thoughts on communication skills and their importance in industrial research. I am pleased to comply with your request, because the topic is a favorite one of mine and I appreciate the opportunity to share my thoughts and concerns with members of the academic community.

In industry, it is axiomatic that, until the results of an experiment have been communicated -- either orally or in writing -- to a person who is in a position to do something about them, the experiment is incomplete and the results are essentially of no value to the company. In the more junior ranks of an industrial research laboratory, written communication is the more important skill, simply because there are not as many opportunities for oral communication up the ranks of the organization. In a highly vertical company such as Mobil, however, opportunities to present ideas and results to top management -- the "decision makers" -- occur at an earlier stage of a scientist's career than in most companies. Time is of the essence to these top-level managers, so that concise presentation of results and their significance to the company is of utmost importance to the advancement of the junior professional.

If there is a dual ladder of advancement in the R&D organization -- as there is in Mobil -- then external publications, internal reports and patents are determining factors in promotions up the technical side of that ladder. Quality of these written forms of communication (rather than simple numbers) is key -- again pointing to the need for a well-developed skill in written communications. Similarly, speaking at internal seminars and project reviews is often the vehicle by which scientists and engineers become known to their colleagues in other parts of the company and their scientific competence is largely judged on their ability to present their hypotheses, experimental procedures and results to this highly critical audience.

There may well have been a time when even the highly creative scientist could work more or less in a vacuum and rely largely on others -- his supervisors, perhaps -- to convey the results of his labors to someone in the organization who could act on them. That's not the case these days; research has become an important tactic in the overall strategy of most successful companies and scientists consequently have to be heard from, in an articulate fashion and on a regular basis.



Educational institutions and industrial research organizations both have a role to play in honing the communications skills of the industrial scientist. As is the case with many other companies, Mobil offers internal courses in public speaking and written communication but the major role in the process has to be taken by our secondary schools and universities. By the time these technically trained people reach us, it is usually too late and we have to take a "Band-Aid" approach when major surgery is really required. Somehow we have to get the message back to the secondary schools that written and oral communication skills are key to success in the total innovative process and must be given more attention in the education of our younger generation.

I'd be interested in your thoughts and reactions to the points I've raised in this letter. I know that you share my concerns in this area.

Sincerely,
(D.D. Phillips)

Brain Burn

Does reading student papers leave you with "brain burn"? Would you like some workable ideas for improving the writing/thinking/learning skills of students? The Shortest Distance to Learning: A Guidebook to Writing Across the Curriculum offers answers, whether you're working with students in the sciences, social sciences, or arts. The following topics with student samples are covered: learning logs, the design of effective writing assignments, effective essay questions, painless evaluation techniques, and ways to help students during the writing process and to improve their comprehension of the texts. The guidebook is available from the Office of Academic Interinstitutional Programs, 1332 Murphy Hall.

JoAn Simmons,
Office of Interinstitutional
Programs, UCLA

Writing Historical Essays

Writing Historical Essays, a 22-page how-to booklet, was compiled by an intercurricular committee from History, Writing Programs, English, AAP, and ARC. It defines the terms most often used in history exams and writing assignments, provides sample outlines and essays, includes guidelines for typing and documentation, and -- perhaps most importantly -- attempts to demystify the essay-writing process by breaking it into six basic steps. Published by APS, Writing Historical Essays is available in the Students' Store.

Another intercurricular committee is now at work on a similar guide for writing sociology papers. This booklet will introduce students to the "sociological perspective" and to the kinds of writing assignments they're likely to encounter in the Sociology Department, such as textual analysis, library research, experiential projects, and papers with a journal format. The booklet will also suggest other sources for help in researching and writing sociology papers.

Constance Coiner,
Writing Programs

Anything is better than not to write clearly. There is nothing to be said against lucidity, and against simplicity only the possibility of dryness. This is a risk well worth taking when you reflect how much better it is to be bald than to wear a curly wig. — Somerset Maugham

Design Principles for Good Essay and Paper Topics

Every topic, however it's worded, has three logical parts. Help students recognize these three logical parts, often hidden in the topic's words and questions, so they can better understand their task (and do it right).

THREE LOGICAL PARTS:

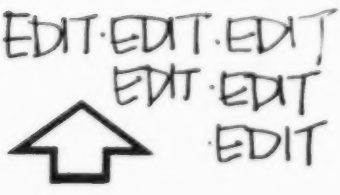
1. At least one imperative -- DO something.
   E.g., Discuss, compare, trace, summarize, explain, assess, analyze.

2. An object of this action -- Do SOMETHING.
   E.g., Discuss the usefulness and reliability of works of fiction as historical sources.

3. Some boundary conditions -- In terms of what?
   E.g., Trace the development of the instititution of democracy from the period of the anti-democratic warrior-aristocracies and oligarchies of the 8th century B.C. down to (and including) the reforms of Cleisthenes.

What's so hard, then? Three problems:

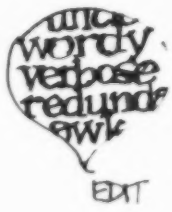
1. We often write questions, sometimes a whole series, which imply this logical three-part task, but which don't make the three parts explicit.
   E.g., What does a carefully developed analysis of the contrasts between the gods Yahweh and Zeus and the men Moses and Socrates tell us about the ways in which the cultural assumptions of ancient Israel and ancient Greece were fundamentally different from each other?
   = Compare and contrast the cultural assumptions of ancient Israel and ancient Greece in terms of their gods Yahweh and Zeus, and their men Moses and Socrates.



2. The explicit imperative may be something general like "discuss," but what we really want students to do is something more specific.
   E.g., Discuss how the following documents set forth different theories concerning the proper relationship that should exist between temporal and spiritual power ...
   = Compare and contrast the theories in the following documents in terms of the proper relationship that should exist between temporal and spiritual power ...

3. We often try to set students going on the right track by prompting them with many questions. But students may not know whether this means they should answer all these questions separately, or if it means (as it usually does) they should make sure their papers include answers and references to these questions.

Ellen Strenski,
Writing Programs



Using Peer Group Editing

Revision is a key ingredient in good writing, but teachers often don't have time to comment on multiple drafts of papers, and students often don't know how to critique and revise their own drafts. Peer-group editing can help solve both problems.

The procedure is fairly simple. A class is divided into small groups of three or four students (the larger the group, the more time each member must spend editing). Students are instructed to write a rough draft of their paper by a given date and to bring enough xerox copies to class for each of the other group members.

The teacher supplies an editing guide which students use to critique each paper, including their own. After writing their critiques (usually out of class), the group then meets during a class period to

discuss the comments they've made about each paper. At the end of this session, each author collects all of the xeroxed copies of the original paper along with the filled-out edit guides, and uses these to revise the paper before submitting it for a grade.

Since many students don't know what to look for in a rough draft, an edit guide provides them with a set of questions (of the teacher's choosing) to help them identify areas that might need improvement. The most effective questions demand more than a simple "yes" or "no" answer from the student, and they ask for the individual student's opinion ("Does the introduction seem effective to you?"). A sample guide for a general analysis paper is included in this Newsletter.

Teachers can encourage good editing in several ways. For example, they can model the editing process by discussing a sample paper in class and pointing out possible comments. If a sample essay is not available, the teacher can read through the questions on the edit guide with students and offer examples of possible responses.

For the editing process to work well, the teacher needs to ensure that students complete each step on time. I lower the grade on the final draft by one letter if the student hasn't finished the rough draft or edit guides on the date they're due. I also require students to turn in their rough drafts and the edit guides filled out on them when they turn in their final draft, so that I can check and comment on the effort students put into critiquing papers. Although methods of giving credit for editing work vary, its importance should be stressed.

Peer editing is a valuable instructional tool which, in my experience, students consistently rate as one of the most helpful aspects of the class.

Cheryl Bolin,
Writing Programs

* *

In the beginning was the Word; shortly after was the first rewrite.

There is no good writing, just good rewriting.

Easy writing makes damned hard reading.
— George Gordon, Lord Byron

* *

Presentation Guidelines for Written Work

While your written work is graded mainly on content, not form, the presentation of your work does matter. Why? It matters to me, of course, because it makes my work easier. Legible, sensible writing is easier to read than disorganized, misspelled, or sloppy work; and when you have to read 40 or more responses to every question, that really makes a difference! Also, since constructing and reading exams and projects are difficult and time-consuming tasks, I appreciate the respect I "read into" a well-presented response.

Just as important, your presentation matters because it's a form of self-respect. After all the trouble you go to in order to learn something in school -- by reading, by attending class, by considering the questions put to you, and in many cases by working hard to support yourself and pay fees -- why show what you've learned in a sloppy way? Your knowledge deserves to be presented well!

What do I mean by "presentation"? I mean the way in which you organize your response and put it on the page in written form. Specifically, good presentation involves:

1) Spelling accurately. Sure, everyone goofs. But consistent or obvious misspelling of important terms shows you either aren't familiar with the material or you haven't bothered to proofread.

2) Using complete words. Leave symbols and abbreviations for note-taking.

3) Using complete sentences. The reader needs a whole thought to grade, not just a hint of what you have in mind!

4) Organizing your thoughts into logical paragraphs, in some reasonable sequence. This can be done according to your own sense of the question or simply in accordance with the subsections indicated.

5) Typing professionally. Type on bond paper, leaving an adequate margin on all sides. Clean the typewriter keys occasionally and use a fresh ribbon. Correct with liquid paper. (On exams, use ink and write neatly, with margins.)

Judith Richlin-Klonsky
TA, Sociology Department

"punctuate"
punctuate?
punctuate!

Who Says Punctuation Doesn't Matter?

version 1:

Weber was not a psychoanalyst like Freud. He never acknowledged any external source of conflict but communal institutions. He respected society's constraints. Civilization's norms and values were the chief subject of his work.

version 2:

Weber was not a psychoanalyst. Like Freud he never acknowledged any external sources of conflict. But communal institutions he respected. Society's constraints -- civilization's norms and values -- were the chief subject of his work.

All writers know that on some golden mornings they are touched by the wand — are on intimate terms with poetry and cosmic truth. I have experienced those moments myself. Their lesson is simple: It's a total illusion. And the danger in the illusion is that you will wait for those moments. Such is the horror of having to face the typewriter that you will spend all your time waiting. I am persuaded that most writers, like most shoemakers, are about as good one day as the next (a point which Trollope made), hangovers apart. The difference is the result of euphoria, alcohol, or imagination. The meaning is that one had better go to his or her typewriter every morning and stay there regardless of the seeming result. It will be much the same. ...

To Be or Not To Be: The Passive Voice

The American National Standard for the Preparation of Scientific Papers (1972) gives the following guideline:

> Authors should not always use verbs in the third person, passive voice. When a verb concerns the interaction of inanimate objects ("the membrane is acted upon by the drug"), the active voice is usually preferable ("the drug acts upon the membrane") because it is more direct and concise. When a verb concerns an author's belief or conjecture, use of the impersonal passive ("it is thought" or "it is suggested") is highly inappropriate. When a verb concerns actions by the author, he should use the first person, especially in matters of experimental design ("to eliminate this possibility, I did the following experiment"). Constant use of the first person is not advisable, however, since it may distract the reader from the subject of the paper.

thanks to Susan Popkin,
Writing Programs

The question of revision is closely allied with that of inspiration. There may be inspired writers for whom the first draft is just right. But anyone who is not certifiably a Milton had better assume that the first draft is a very primitive thing. The reason is simple: Writing is difficult work. Ralph Paine, who managed Fortune in my time, used to say that anyone who said writing was easy was either a bad writer or an unregenerate liar. Thinking, as Voltaire avowed, is also a very tedious thing which men — or women — will do anything to avoid. So all first drafts are deeply flawed by the need to combine composition with thought. Each later draft is less demanding in this regard. Hence the writing can be better. — John Kenneth Galbraith, "Writing, Typing, and Economics" in Atlantic Monthly, March 1978.

A Professor's Guide to Perpetuating Poor Writing Among Students

Although students in past years have received generous help from their instructors in maintaining and developing poor writing habits, the current clamor for "writing across the curriculum" threatens to make poor writing passe.

It is probably unnecessary to remind my colleagues in academe that any rise in student literacy will endanger our present sense of superiority and deprive us of one of the best topics for lunch-table complaining. So, in the interest of perpetuating the hallowed tradition of hollow academic prose, I offer here a few suggestions to professors (and TAs) interested in maintaining the current level of student literacy.

Assign 20-page papers. There is nothing like the long paper for developing students' skills in padding and plagiarizing. When you hit freshmen with an assignment to write 20 pages, they will quickly learn that they do not know enough about the subject and will have to be resourceful in turning words into phrases, phrases into clauses, and clauses into lengthy sentences.

They will also learn that a good long quotation can use up almost a page of the 20, and that there are many ways of repeating the same generalization in different words. Such knowledge is something they can build on throughout their college careers.

Keep the assignment or examination question as general as possible. If you let students know the purpose of the assignment, they will not have the opportunity to let their imaginations soar. When asking an examination question, give the students room to demonstrate what they know. I remember fondly my examination in ancient history, which contained only two well-thought-out questions: "Discuss the history of ancient Greece" and "Discuss the history of ancient Rome." What inventiveness that examination inspired!

My brilliant effort was soon overshadowed by a colleague, however. "I want a 20-page research paper by the last week of the course," he said smilingly to his class one September morning. Pause. Silence. Throats cleared, glances exchanged. Finally a hand raised. A student in the first row said nervously, "Will you be announcing the topics soon?"

The instructor's timing, I must admit, was masterful. "No topic. Just write me a good paper on something to do with this course."

Those poor freshmen never knew what hit them. If it weren't for the fraternity files, some of them would never have completed the assignment.

Forbid first-person pronouns. By doing so you will establish the habit of scientific objectivity, which, as we all know, depends on the passive voice. By not allowing the use of I or we, you will also be maintaining the pillars of poor writing: the passive voice ("It was observed that..."), the wordy construction ("It is the opinion of this writer that..."), and the dangling modifier ("Having analyzed the data, pink elephants appeared as a symptom of delirium tremens.")

...a 20 pg. paper discussing the political and social ramifications of such an issue on society, keeping in mind the degree to which such ideas...
TA

Don't show them; tell them. Announce that you expect a 20-page research paper on December 25. Don't do the librarians' job by conducting tours of the reference room. Do not allow yourself to be drawn into discussions of bibliographical tools and basic references. Any freshman should somehow pick up that knowledge by the end of the first month; it is not the business of teachers to waste time on such minutiae. Let the English department do its job of teaching the research tools in every discipline.

Encourage polysyllabic prose. Let your students know right from the first day that the use of big words is a mark of intelligence. They must understand the economic fact that a 25-cent word is five times better than a nickel word. You can of course demonstrate this constantly in your lectures, but it is also important to supply students with other models. These are usually readily available -- the textbook for the course is probably an excellent example.

Never review a draft of a paper in progress. Not only is such a practice time-consuming and detrimental to your quest for a publishable note or query, but it also violates the proper relationship between student and teacher. You are the judge and jury, not a coach or a cheerleader. Students must figure out complex assignments on their own. We did. Why shouldn't they?

Do not make comments on student papers unless absolutely necessary. If you must write something, keep it suitably vague (a scrawled "awkward" is fine). Write it on the first page; that way the student will never know whether you read the whole paper. Poor writing demands that the writer be kept in the dark about the reader's reactions. Detailed comments on papers should be left to English departments; English teachers need to write long reactions to justify their existence.

Ignore errors in spelling and punctuation. Once again, you must not infringe upon the English department's territory. If you find a misspelled word or a fragmentary sentence, take the paper right to the nearest English teacher and let him or her know how you feel with a subtle barb like "Don't you teach these students anything?" Your colleagues will be glad to know that you, too, are concerned about students' writing.

Criticize anything that is clear as "simplistic." Focus your attention on sentence length. Students must learn that you will not tolerate short sentences.

After all, college is not grade school, and the ability to generate sentences of 64 to 100 words is the mark of a potential scholar, one who can spin a monograph a year off the top of his head or out of the depth of his files. Here, too, the use of appropriate models will do wonders -- grant proposals prepared by committees are good sources of inspirational example.

If you can avoid returning papers to students, do so. Obviously this last, and most important, principle, if followed rigorously, will do more to frustrate improvement in students' writing than any of the previous rules. The students will never know whether their words have been read by even one reader.

What better preparation for "real world" writing could we offer?

John Keenan, Chairman of English and Communication Arts, La Salle College, Pa. Reprinted with permission of the author, copyright Chronicle of Higher Education, 1983.

Another Professor's Guide to Perpetuating Good Writing Among Students

In recent years, increasing attention has been paid to writing instruction in the upper division of the undergraduate curriculum. As early as 1963 Albert Kitzhaber, in one of the pioneering pieces of research in English Composition (Themes, Theories, and Therapy: The Teaching of Writing in College), showed that students needed to write throughout the undergraduate years if what they learned in the Freshman courses was to stay with them. Otherwise, senior year found them right back at square one. In the 1950's, especially in small liberal-arts colleges and in the Ivy League universities with a strong undergraduate tradition, this kind of writing went without saying. If you majored in English at Yale, as I did in the middle fifties, you wrote papers all the time, and they were read and annotated with care. It was an enormously time-consuming business for all concerned but we felt -- again, it really went without saying -- that this kind of written expression stood at the center of a liberal education. It was simply where the central learning occurred. This kind of writing-intensive liberal arts curriculum prevailed in the small liberal-arts college through the sixties and beyond. When I began teaching English at Dartmouth in the early sixties (in the Department which Kitzhaber had studied in Themes, Theories, and Therapy) I grew accustomed to reading about 20,000 words a week of undergraduate prose. It was, crede mihi, an enormous task, but it stood at the center of the curriculum, was what it all built toward. So we did it.

In the last dozen or 15 years, though, this assumed centrality of writing has gotten lost in the swirl of events. It had never been very strong at the big state university -- there were just too many students -- and it suffered everywhere from all the things that have caused the literacy crisis: TV, the breakdown of the schools, the opening of the university to kinds of students not formerly allowed to matriculate, all the things that have so changed what university teaching is about and how it gets done. As students came to the university less and less well-prepared, professors who themselves were increasingly pressured by the academic career-game found the burden of paper-reading harder and harder to bear. Mostly, they just stopped assigning papers and moved, even in humanistic instruction, to machine-gradable exercises.

Writing-Across-the-Curriculum has tried to reverse this procedure. Two basic ways have been tried: 1) professors in a particular discipline have been asked to assign more writing, tutored in how best to assign it, and been given TA assistance in grading and commenting upon it; 2) special courses, taught by composition specialists, have been attached to upper-division courses in the traditional disciplines. Usually the first method has been tried at the small liberal arts college, the second at the large state university campus like UCLA. The first model seems more natural, and no doubt is to be preferred in the abstract, but in the large research-oriented university you just cannot get the faculty to devote the extra time needed to this kind of instruction. You have to add the resources, and the expertise, up front, and make it free, a general charge to the campus rather than a particular one to the department concerned. This, at least, is how we have chosen to do it at UCLA. Our "Writing Intensive" courses (English 100Ws) are attached to classes in the disciplines and permit students to do more writing than they otherwise would and in an area of special interest to them. Doing it this way has turned out to have an unexpected benefit. The writing instructor comes into a discipline and its special language (and the university is a kind of Balkans of special languages) as if a visiting anthropologist. She notices all the conventions and constraints of that subculture and its language and can make the students (and the TAs, and faculty) self-conscious about these boundary-conditions of their discourse in a way they could seldom do themselves. This self-consciousness, surely, is one of the goals of humanistic instruction in language.

None of us involved in designing and teaching programs of this sort would claim that we have succeeded in putting writing back at the center of humanistic instruction. We have, though, done this for at least some students, and we have learned some valuable lessons about how to do it for a great many more. Per aspera ad astra.

Richard A. Lanham,
Professor of English
Executive Director,
UCLA Writing Programs

A Prose Paramedic

Your problem is this: someone turns in five pages of styleless gobbledygook entitled "The Sociology of Crabgrass." Do you let the style offend you and assign an "F," or do you return the paper for revision? And if you return it for revision, what, for god's sake, do you tell the student to revise?

R.A. Lanham (Professor of English, UCLA) assists the TA with a few suggestions.

First, circle the prepositions. Most rhythmless, run-on sentences, you'll find, run on strings of prepositional phrases. Practice with this one: "In an ongoing study of wheat farming in India, researchers are in the process of demonstrating that the presence of sacred cows in large numbers on the properties of peasant farmers is a significant factor in the growth of crabgrass on the arable land in question." Hear how the rhythm thumpity-thumps from one preposition to the next? A train ride couldn't put you to sleep faster. Remedy: don't string prepositional phrases together. No more than two in a row, if you can help it. A first-stage revision might go like this: "A study of Indian wheat farming is demonstrating that sacred cows are a significant factor in the growth of crabgrass." Better, because we've eliminated ten thumpity-thumping prepositional phrases. But still dead. Dead as sacred cow-dung.

Look at the verbs: lifeless forms of "to be," the weakest verb the student could find. Undergraduates shy away from active verbs; they sound too assertive. So circle the forms of "to be," too, and tell your student to rewrite his essay, using strong, active verbs. The exercise is easier (and more fun) than you imagine. Ask yourself, "Where's the action?" Our example buries it in "growth." The writer has turned a nice strong verb ("grows") into a noun. Revised, with action resurrected, we might have: "Crabgrass grows where sacred animals leave holy relics on the ground."

Finally, tell your student to vary sentence length, breaking endless shopping-bag sentences into shorter, more rhythmic units.

For more such advice consult R.A. Lanham's Revising Prose -- paperback, cheap and available at the Students' Store! Students may view the accompanying videotape (also titled Revising Prose) in 290 Powell Library, or you can arrange a screening for your class through Audio Visual Services (call 206-6591).

Robert Byrnes,
English

Common Myths About Writing

Most of us have learned some common superstitions about writing and what's acceptable or unacceptable in formal prose. Some myths are more trenchant than others; you may even find your students to be more ardent advocates of these myths than you are.

1. Never use "I" in a formal paper.

This injunction may have been devised to eliminate the "I believe ..." "I think ..." verbal tic that often afflicts beginning writers. As with anything else, "I" should not be overused or abused; but it certainly is acceptable in academic writing, especially in argumentative prose when you want to claim a thesis or special perspective as your own. In scientific writing, "I" is conventionally avoided in favor of more "neutral" constructions, but even here you're not limited to passive constructions (see "To Be or Not to Be?" in this Newsletter).

2. Never use "you" in formal writing.

This rule too should not be seen as absolute. It's usually not a good idea to use "you" to refer to people in general ("you consider Hamlet to be Shakespeare's most complex play"): your reader may not share your judgment and ask "who, me?" Do feel free, however, to say "you" when you intend to refer to your reader, when you're addressing him or her directly (as in this sentence).

3. Never use contractions in formal writing.

It's become more and more acceptable to use contractions in formal writing. Including an occasional contraction can make your writing sound more natural and smooth; in fact, an absolute ban on contractions may force a writer to produce awkward and stiff constructions. Just avoid excesses in either direction.

4. Never begin a sentence with "and" or "but."

This rule may also have been devised to prevent writers from creating unintentional sentence fragments. Starting an occasional sentence with "and" or "but," though, can be an effective transitional device. And it can give your prose an easy and natural sound. But just make sure the sentence you begin with one of these words really is a sentence!

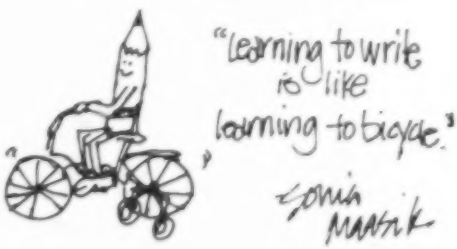
5. Every essay must have an introduction, body, and conclusion.

Yes and no. Yes, most essays will begin by introducing the subject and argument to the reader, continue with supporting evidence, and bring together the implications of this material in a conclusion. But you need not always adhere to a rigid "five-paragraph" essay format, one that supplies a prefabricated outline in advance of your thinking about the subject. You face disaster as a writer if you force your ideas to fit an already existing format: what's usually sacrificed are the ideas themselves. Instead, your organization should follow from the strength and character of your ideas: if it seems more compelling to begin your essay with a riveting example, by all means do so.

6. Good writers always find writing easy.

A comment by John Henry Cardinal Newman is enough to dispel this myth:

> I write. I write again. I write again ... then I take the third; I literally fill the paper with corrections. I then write it out fair for the printer. I put it by; I take it up: I begin to correct again, it will not do. Alterations multiply; pages are rewritten; little lines sneak in and crawl out. The whole page is disfigured; I write again; I cannot count how many times the process is repeated.



7. Learning to write well is an experience like learning to ride a bicycle.

People often assume that once you've been successful at writing, you will always be able to write well. But unlike a skill such as bike riding, writing is a complex process that needs constant practice (see Richard A. Lanham's article in this Newsletter).

Sonia Maasik,
Writing Programs

Writing and rewriting are a constant search for what it is one is saying. — John Updike

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Don't expect your reader to accept a piece of writing that you wouldn't accept yourself. — Donald H. Ross

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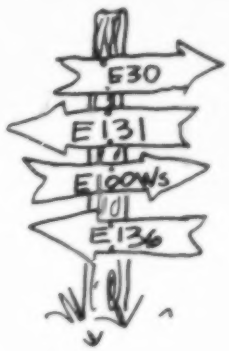


Life After English 3

Students completing English 3 often ask, "What writing class can I take now?" The most familiar option is English 4, a course that introduces students to writing about literature. But for those students who want a different emphasis, Writing Programs offers several alternatives.

Students who did well in English 3 and who feel ready for advanced exposition may enroll in English 131. This class works toward stylistic awareness and sophistication. In 131, students develop editing skills more fully, formulate and carry out individual projects, and build on the level they had attained in English 3. Another distinguishing feature of 131 is the special sections. These include pre-law, business, technical writing, journalism, and honors, and they are expanding as student need dictates.

English 30 is designed particularly for transfer students who have not taken English 3 here. We find that students from other schools sometimes feel at a disadvantage when competing with our own English 3 alumni and alumnae. However, English 3 graduates who do less well or who simply feel the need for more basic work before tackling the demands of 131 may also enroll in 30. It is primarily a class in academic discourse, with an emphasis on writing across the disciplines and on research techniques.

Our post-English 3 program covers three additional areas: 100Ws, the pedagogy series, and the popular 136 (limited to seniors). The 100Ws are two-unit courses attached to a base course in another field--chemistry, economics, political science, to name a few. These provide a good opportunity for students who wish to continue to work on writing in a specific discipline. The other two, pedagogy and practical writing, are more specialized courses.

We hope that all students who wish to refine their writing skills and go beyond the training they receive in freshman composition will find a class which suits their needs.

Janette Lewis,
Writing Programs

Teaching Reading for Writing

As an instructor, you're responsible not only for presenting course material but also for helping students understand it. The following techniques can help you help students to read effectively and to think critically, skills leading to effective critical writing.

Pre-Reading

Before reading anything in depth, students should employ the pre-reading technique of surveying the material. Surveying the text gives students a background, a framework that will help them organize the information they will get from a particular reading.

When students survey an assignment, they should follow these steps:

1. Focus on the title. The title may give straightforward information about content, or it may suggest a certain approach or attitude towards content.
2. Look for pictures, graphs, or other illustrations. Such extras often can give a sense of what to expect in the reading.
3. Read the first sentence of each paragraph. In many cases, this will be the topic sentence, the main idea of the paragraph.
4. Read the final paragraph. This is probably the conclusion, or a summary of
5. Look for annotation. Read any introductions, chapter overviews, or interim summaries. Take note of headings and sub-headings. Are some words underlined or in italics? This may mean there is a glossary, or that words are defined in footnotes or page margins.

Research shows that students understand and retain information best when the instructor has prepared them for their reading assignments. Such preparation can be informal - simply tell students what to focus on as they read, what the general content of the assignment is, what stance the author takes on the material, and how the material will relate to writing assignments - or it can be structured, consisting of reading guides, study questions, or an outline of the material. Reading preparation works especially well with lower-division or underprepared students.

Marking the Text

Emphasize to students that books used for learning and teaching are meant to be written in. Demonstrate that many of the books that teachers use for lectures are covered with notes, remarks, reminders, question marks, exclamation points, and underlinings. Encourage students to mark their textbooks for two reasons: first, by writing comments in a book while they read, they force themselves to read critically and engage the text. Second, marking the text can aid in organizing and retaining information as students read and study. It can help establish the importance of ideas and the relationship between facts and ideas. And students can mark quotations and examples for use in their own essays.

Have students look for logical connectors or words in the text which signal listings of important ideas, causes, or reasons, such as "first," "next," "finally." When students write, they should be using logical connectors for coherence. When they read, they should take advantage of an author's use of logical connectors for the same purpose. Logical connectors show how information in a text is organized; they highlight important information; and, in difficult passages, they can help the student decode logical relationships.

Locating the Author's Thesis

Emphasize to students that a thesis is the main point or argument of an essay. It logically formulates the author's main ideas and their implications. All articles, whether argumentative, analytical, descriptive, or narrative, have a thesis, either directly stated or only implied. By articulating an author's thesis, a student can clarify the main idea as he or she reads.

Surveying an article may reveal its thesis, which often appears in the title, the introduction, the first paragraph, or the concluding paragraph. To find the thesis, students should begin by reading the first several paragraphs, its usual location. A thesis may be one sentence or a full paragraph in length. They will recognize it by its general speculations or claims, unsupported by details or illustrations, and undeveloped by abstract explanation. It may also be recognized as opinion instead of factual or obvious statement. Tell students to ask themselves the following questions:

1) What is the focus of the article? What does it discuss, what does it deal with?

2) Is the author trying to prove something about the general topic? How does he view it?

3) What are the major topic ideas? Taken together, they should add up to be the thesis.

4) Have students state the thesis in their own words, highlighting the main idea and including the abstract supporting ideas.

Engaging the Text

Point out to students that reading should not be a passive experience. They shouldn't think of reading as merely getting information from a printed page. They also shouldn't think that they must read something straight through without stopping, backtracking, or checking what they've read. Effective academic reading involves actually engaging the text. This means stopping to ask questions as they read, relating what they read to what they already know about the subject, realizing that a live author dwells behind the printed word and wants to convey information or to convince them - pro or con - about something he or she considers important. When students read they should be stopping to think, to agree or disagree with the author behind the text. This kind of active reading may seem slow, but it is in fact efficient because it helps students understand the material better and can make their reading more enjoyable and interesting. Active student reading involves stopping to question ideas and judgments, pinning down terminology, and calling to mind previous knowledge of the subject.

Knowing an author's association with a particular religious, political, or philosophical school can also help prepare students for reading their work. If they're dealing with a persuasive work, biographical information becomes even more important. Students should be aware that few writers are completely objective; most of us write with assumptions and biases. Because of their biases, authors make assumptions in their writing. They take for granted that certain things are true and they need not explain or defend their point of view for the reader. As readers, students should be able to detect authors' biases and their underlying assumptions. If students don't examine biases and assumptions as they read, they may accept ideas, explanations, or arguments which they ought instead to question.

As a reading skill, knowledge of a writer's bias gives students a framework for approaching their reading. Tell students that they can't always assume that a writer injects his personal bias in his writing, since many writers aim at objectivity, but looking for biases and assumptions should always be part of the questioning process in their critical reading.

Paraphrasing

Throughout the reading process, students should use their paraphrasing skills both as a means of engaging the text and as a way of preparing to write. By putting an author's ideas into their own words, students clarify the ideas for themselves, which equips them for working with the ideas in writing. To paraphrase, students should:

1. Find the focus of a sentence or paragraph - its main idea.
2. Think of synonyms for the main words or phrases.
3. Restate the idea in their own words and sentence structure.

Instructors in all classes should see themselves as reading and writing teachers as well as subject teachers, since reading constitutes the foundation of all academic work.

Jeanne Gunner
Writing Programs
Ed Frankel,
Learning Resources Center

Preventing Plagiarism

Unfortunately, no assignment can be guaranteed plagiarism-proof: what with paper mills in Westwood, the proliferation of study aids, and large classes, plagiarism remains a potential that is sometimes realized in our classrooms. But you can take some steps that will make students think twice about attempting to copy or cheat in your class:

1. Include in your syllabus a definition of plagiarism (see sample at end of this article) and give your students notice that you expect them to follow standard principles of documentation. You may want to explain this definition on the first day of the term. Such an explanation can warn more callous students that you're not an "easy mark"; it can also instruct the occasional naive student who may not know what plagiarism means in the University.

2. Try to make assignments and course expectations as explicit as possible (see "Design Principles for Good Essay and Paper Topics"). "Write a three-page essay analyzing Hamlet's character" is an open invitation for a student to rely on Cliff's Notes. Specific assignments will also prevent students from floundering and turning to outside sources in desperation.

3. You may ask students to submit first a rough draft, then a final version for your formal evaluation: that way you can see the student's work-in-progress. Or you can require that students submit their rough drafts and notes along with the final version.

4. If you assign a research paper, be sure to explain to students how to use source material in your field. Some students may have learned in high school that research is only a matter of collecting information (and as much as possible); it's then just a short step from "collection" to "copying." Let them know how and why research is used in your field. Then be sure to explain your discipline's documentary procedures.

5. If your department has a back file of assignments for the course you're teaching, check it and avoid repeating assignments, especially in the same school year.

6. Discuss openly in class the difficulties of writing. Help students understand that the anxieties or blocks that they face are a normal part of the writing process. "If, in the classroom, you emphasize the stages of the composing process and the normal tribulations of every writer, your students may be less likely to conclude that cheating is the only feasible way of getting from an assigned topic to a finished paper" (English 1A-1B Guidelines, UC Berkeley TA Guide, p. 18).

7. Don't be afraid to confront a student you suspect has plagiarized. The task is unpleasant for all instructors, but doing so may help prevent plagiarism in the future.

plā·jə·rizm:

Sample plagiarism notice for your syllabus:

Plagiarism is a serious offense: it is the presentation of another writer's words or ideas if they were your own. University regulations require that all instances of plagiarism be reported to the Dean of Students for disciplinary action. If you do use another author's words or ideas, you need to indicate your source. We'll discuss plagiarism and documentation further in class, but if you're ever unsure of whether or how you should document a source, feel free to consult with me.

Sonia Maasik,
Writing Programs

Tutoring

If you have students who need additional help with the writing assignments in your class, you can refer them to one of UCLA's free tutoring services. This help can cure many writing problems, from writer's block to ineffective revision. The tutors are UCLA undergraduate and graduate students chosen for their proven writing abilities and thoroughly trained in problem-solving strategies for writing. They offer students quarter-long individual attention that can improve their language competency. As part of these services, specially trained ESL (English as a Second Language) tutors can provide additional instruction in speech and communication. All tutorial services are available to any regularly enrolled UCLA student.

The Academic Resources Center Tutorial Office is located in 290 Powell Library, and students may make appointments in person or by phone at 206-1211 between 8 and 5 weekdays. The Academic Advancement Program Tutorial Center (which serves only those students in AAP) is located in 2210 Campbell Hall, and sign-ups are taken in person there prior to the fifth week of classes in any quarter.

Paul Rosenbaum,
Writing Programs

In language, clarity is everything. — Confucius

Good writers are those who keep the language efficient. That is to say, keep it accurate, keep it clear. — Ezra Pound

"Where shall I begin?" he asked. "Begin at the beginning," the King said, "and stop when you get to the end." — Alice in Wonderland

How to Use Writing Assignments Without Grading Papers

-Have students write short summaries of lectures to create their own study guides. Occasionally comment on a sample or two.

-Give an occasional ten-minute short-essay quiz. Skim the answers and choose one or two to read or distribute to the class. Or have small groups of students screen the answers and select models.

-Pass out an article in your field with the abstract removed. Ask students to reconstruct the abstract from reading the essay. Then distribute the professional abstract and ask students to compare their own work with "industry standards" -- in writing, of course.

-Award at least a point or two for clarity and correctness of writing in the written assignments you normally give.

Robert Cullen,
Writing Programs

Cost-effective 'Corrections'

Comments are your personal, professionally informed response to the paper's ideas and expression. They supplement your grade and should reflect your assessment. Skim the entire paper quickly before writing anything. Don't try to identify and comment on everything. Pick a few problems that represent serious logical confusion, or a few promising ideas inadequately developed. The examples in the tips below come from the annotated student essay in Writing Historical Essays, ASUCLA, 1982.

1. Identify and praise success. Example: "a clear well-written paragraph," "a good active construction."

2. Personalize comments. Address the author by name and refer to yourself. Example: "Angela, I'm not sure I understand how there could be tension if the father was in complete control."

3. Never just correct a mistake in grammar or spelling (copy editing). Studies have shown that simply being presented with a corrected text leads to NO improvement. But do mark mechanical errors to let the student know they matter to you. Many mistakes result from laziness, not ignorance. Students reason that they don't need to bother to clean up and polish their prose if their readers don't care.

4. Place the problem in its most useful category. Example: "The definition of a joint stock company could be tighter. What 'land' was given? Where? What 'commerce' was involved?"

5. Show how the problem could be corrected. As a last resort, rewrite. Example: "They were. It was (colony=singular)"

6. Show how the problem could be recognized next time. Example: "The Virginians. If you leave 'They' it's not clear whether 'they' refers to the Virginians or to the Puritans."

7. Refer the student to a tutor about a specific problem. Example: "Check run-on sentences with your tutor."

8. Relate a problem to a difficulty it causes the reader. Example: "Ambiguous. It's not clear whether inflation caused them or whether inflation encouraged their growth."

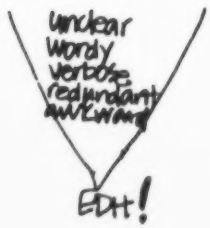
9. Never just write "awkward" or "?" without comment.

10. Ask questions; don't just criticize. Example: "Does this mean that Massachusetts Bay wanted to lose $? What was their attitude to $? Was it dramatically opposed, as you imply?"

11. Phrase suggestions tentatively. Example: "You seem to be implying here that 'fulfilling the Covenant' is equivalent to 'forming towns.' It might be a good idea to help the reader understand the connection here. How about explaining the connection in more detail?"

12. Write legibly and don't use abbreviations or proofreading symbols unless you are sure students will understand them.

13. Criticize ideas and their expression, not the person who wrote them. This may mean controlling your exasperation and frustration. You are evaluating a paper, not an author.



14. Bear in mind the purposes of these comments. Are you essentially trying to justify your grade by demonstrating how bad the paper is? Are you trying to push the student to think through and develop the ideas in this paper? Are you trying to prepare the student for improvement on the next paper? Are you trying to feel super-conscientious by spending a lot of time and ink on the paper?

Ellen Strenski,
Writing Programs

★ ★ ★ ★ ★ ★ ★

And how is clarity to be achieved? Mainly by taking trouble; and by writing to serve people rather than to impress them. — F.L. Lucas

★ ★ ★ ★ ★ ★ ★

In composing, as a general rule, run your pen through every other word you have written; you have no idea what vigor it will give your style. — Sydney Smith

★ ★ ★ ★ ★ ★ ★

The difference between the almost right word and the right word is really a large matter — 'tis the difference between the lightning-bug and the lightning. — Mark Twain

Writing Reading

GENERAL GUIDES

William Strunk, Jr. and E.B. White, The Elements of Style (New York: Macmillan, 1959) --An outdated, hard-to-use book without an index. All the sensible things it says are easily found elsewhere, but this is the book your professors know.

John R. Trimble, Writing with Style: Conversations on the Art of Writing (Englewood Cliffs, NJ: Prentice-Hall, 1975) -- A self-contained course in college writing. Always down to earth and practical, this book covers the bases from brainstorming through organizational schemes to punctuation -- all in 140 pages. It's even fun to read.

Eugene Ehrlich and Daniel Murphy, Concise Index to English (New York: McGraw-Hill, 1974) -- Only one of many short grammar handbooks on the market, but because it's organized alphabetically it's especially easy to use. Got a problem with semicolons? Look under "S." Forgotten the distinction between "imply" and "infer"? Flip to the "I's."

Richard A. Lanham, Revising Prose (New York: Scribner's, 1979) -- If years of studying textbooks has poisoned your own writing with jargon and wordiness, this book offers the sure antidote. Lanham's "Paramedic Method" is a formula guaranteed to cure bureaucratese and restore your prose's vigor.

Harold H. Kolb, Jr., A Writer's Guide: The Essential Points (New York: Harcourt Brace Jovanovich, 1980) -- A straightforward handbook covering a remarkable range of topics, from "coherence" to "footnote form" to "typing conventions." It's quite easy to use because it's organized alphabetically.

Joseph Williams, Style: Ten Lessons in Clarity and Grace (Glenview, IL: Scott, Foresman and Co., 1981) -- An aptly titled work, this book offers insightful, usable advice on making prose more elegant and more effective.

DISCIPLINE-SPECIFIC GUIDES

Edward T. Cremmins, The Art of Abstracting (Philadelphia: ISI Press, 1982).

Leonard Becker and Clair Gustafson, Encounter with Sociology: The Term Paper (Berkeley: Glendessary Press, 1968).

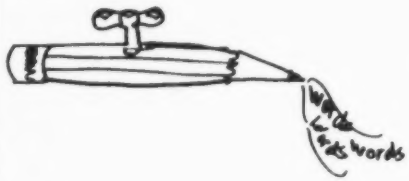
Norman Cantor and Richard I. Schneider, How to Study History (Arlington Heights, IL: AHM Publishing, 1967).

Robert A. Day, How to Write and Publish a Scientific Paper (Philadelphia: ISI Press, 1983).

Herbert Michaelson, How to Write and Publish Engineering Papers and Reports (Philadelphia: ISI Press).

Edward J. Huth, How to Write and Publish Papers in the Medical Sciences (Philadelphia: ISI Press).

Bernard Goldman, Reading and Writing in the Arts (Detroit: Wayne State University Press, 1978).



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Richard A. Lanham, Revising Business Prose (New York: Scribner's, 1981).

Robert Barrass, Scientists Must Write (New York: Chapman and Hall, 1978).

Sylvan Barnet, A Short Guide to Writing about Art (Boston: Little, Brown and Co., 1981).

So You Have to Write an Economics Term Paper, available from the Department of Economics, Michigan State University, East Lansing, Michigan 48824.

Joyce S. Steward and Marjorie Smelstor, Writing in the Social Sciences (Glenview, Ill.: Scott, Foresman and Co., 1984).

Sam Trelease, How to Write Scientific and Technical Papers (Baltimore: Williams and Wilkins, 1969).

Conference of Biological Editors, The Style Manual for Biological Journals (Washington, D.C.: American Institute of Biological Sciences, 1960).

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Mike Moore and Ellen Strenski,
Writing Programs

Pedantry consists in the use of words unsuitable to the time, place, and company. — Samuel Taylor Coleridge

□ □ □ □ □

A powerful agent is the right word. Whenever we come upon one of those intensely right words in a book or newspaper the resulting effect is physical as well as spiritual, and electronically prompt. — Mark Twain

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Sentences in their variety run from simplicity to complexity, a progression not necessarily reflected in length: a long sentence may be extremely simple in construction — indeed MUST be simple if it is to convey its sense easily. — Sir Herbert Read

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The TA at UCLA Newsletter

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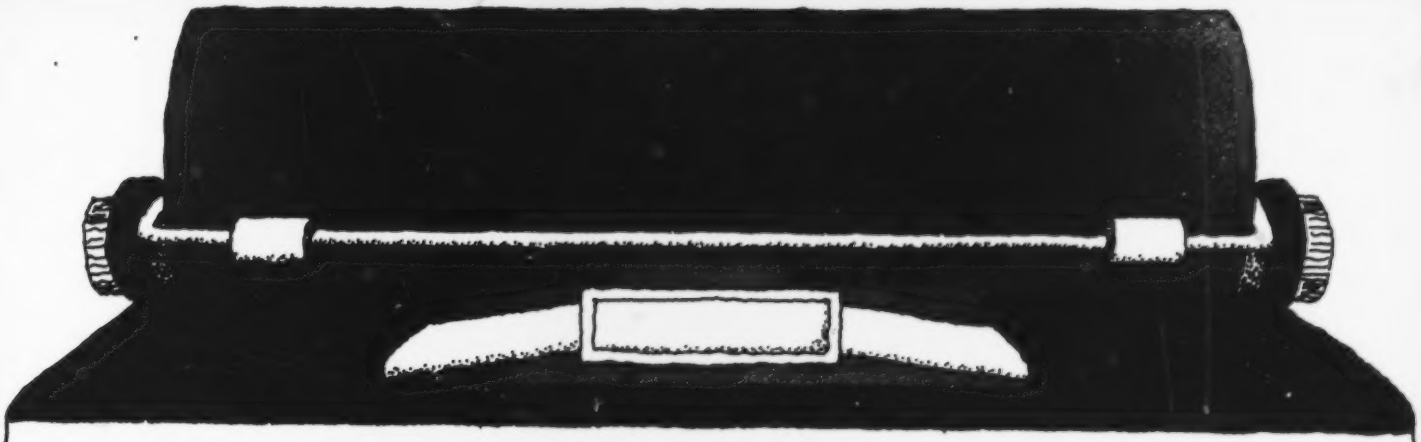
1984 Regents of the University of California



Differing Conceptions of Grading

Grading and the assessment of student performance has been an important point of controversy for many years in higher education. Nearly all would agree that grades fundamentally are a method of communication. Through a grade, an instructor is presumably trying to communicate something to someone else. However, the major point of conflict and debate comes when one seeks to determine what the instructor is trying to communicate to whom. Thus, when one seeks to put grading into context, three things become apparent: (1) What the instructor communicates by a grade depends upon the meaning of the grade to the person reading it--that is, the effect that it has on that person; (2) An instructor giving a grade is communicating to several groups: the student, professors teaching advanced courses, graduate or professionsal admissions committees, and prospective employers, to name a few; and (3) An instructor cannot change the meaning of grades unilaterally. While the grade may have a new meaning for an instructor, many reading the grade will continue to interpret it in terms of the meanings they have traditionally assigned to grades.

According to Wilbert McKeachie, there are certain expectations which must be considered when developing a personal "philosophy" of grading. Grades are not just an historical record of what has happened, they are often used as information about what a student can do outside the class for which the grade was awarded. McKeachie contrasts the meanings and usefulness of grades for students, professors, and prospective employers. Students use grades to assist them in deciding whether or not to take additional courses in the field, to decide upon a major, to assess their capabilities and prospects for working independently in a field, and to assess self worth. Professors, on the other hand, use grades to assess whether or not students have the motivation, skills, knowledge, and ability to do well in advanced courses. Prospective employers, on the other hand, may use grades as an indicator of how well the student might be able to solve problems on a job related to the area of course work and to determine whether the person will do well in their organization.

McKeachie advocates relatively traditional grading methods. He believes grades are imperfect indicators of achievement and potential performance, at best. However, because grades are commonly used in combination with other variables, they are but another source of information available to decision-makers. He also notes that the research on grading is not conclusive, but that it does suggest that conventional grading is conducive to achievement. Thus, grades are not perfect predictors of future success in a field of study or a job, but they are as good or better than the alternatives. Since grades are typically based on a sample of achievement in the domain of the course goals, the better the sample, the more useful the grade.

McKeachie's position has given rise to much criticism. There are those who maintain that he is mistaken to assume that grades ever have uniform meanings. Even if two instructors agree that A means excellent, that B means good, C average, and so on, there is no guarantee that these two teachers agree on what those terms mean. Michael Arrington, Professor of Linguistics at the University of Minnesota, has admitted that students who cry

(continued on next page)

in this issue:
GRADING

on his shoulder have always gotten better grades than they deserved. Liking or disliking a student may affect that student's grades, no matter how objective one tries to be. Arrington also notes that the difference between an A- and a B+ often hangs on factors extraneous to course performance—factors like attendance, whether a student's face is remembered, or whether the student appeared during office hours. Thus, reports Arrington, a student's excellence—or lack of it—is not faithfully mirrored in the grades assigned even though his teacher is committed to a traditional interpretation of grades. Given the highly variable nature of individual instructors and their grades, Arrington argues strongly in favor of using the grade point average alone as an indicator of future academic success. Sources of error present in individual course grades tend to cancel one another out in the overall gpa, provided that the student has sampled a fairly large variety of courses and instructors.

With regard to contract grading, behavioral objectives, and mastery grading, McKeachie has argued that students gain points through these systems not for achievement, but rather for carrying out activities such as writing papers or reading books that **should** be conducive to achievement. Thus, rather than measuring learning, instructors are assessing whether the student has engaged in activities that are the **means** to learning. Professor Arrington, on the other hand, argues that these "alternative grading systems" are the result of attempts to clarify communication between teacher and student. These systems attempt to make the meaning of a grade more precise and more objective and seek to relate performance to evaluation of performance in such a way as to reduce the biases of teachers and others to a minimum.

Finally, in his response to Arrington's remarks, McKeachie notes that he does not really object to mastery or contract grading **per se**. However, the evidence suggests that many instructors using these grading systems assign higher grades for the same level of competence than those who use the conventional method. This is what McKeachie finds most objectionable. He concludes by noting that innovations in grading should not be rejected out of hand, but rather encouraged so long as instructors do not forget the complexity of the communication system of which they are a part.

AAUP BULLETIN, Vol. 63:53-55 and Vol. 62:320-322.

You Are Not Your Grade

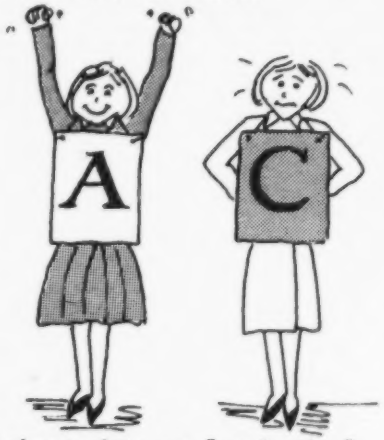
Over a year ago, a committed group of students in an "Advanced Interpersonal Communication" course decided to establish a form of self-evaluation as a possible component in the final grade. The decision to do so, they found, was considerably easier than following through on it systematically and responsibly. As one student lamented, "I've never had to think before about what an A or B or C really meant—I've just gone through school being happy or disappointed at what I got."

Although I had encouraged student self-evaluation before, never had a group seemed so sincere in exploring what was behind a grade. I had to confess to them that in my years of teaching I had not developed a clear personal philosophy describing what grades might indicate about a student's learning in the context of the classroom, nor had I confronted the crucial question of what or who the grade was really for. As with many teachers, I fear, it simply became habitual to attach A's to the "best" students' work, B's to the "next best" students (whatever that means!), and so on. I could justify the bases for my decisions to the administration if required to, and I consistently tried to be fair. Surely that was all that could be required or expected of a teacher attempting to be humane and communicative.

Now I believe that the position of "communication teacher" demands more of me. The grading system as it is customarily applied dehumanizes students if we believe or allow others to believe that students themselves are graded. Yet, in

swapping stories with colleagues and students, I discover this is often the assumption even in communication classes where we might be expected to know better. Labeling people affects them, often diminshing them to the triviality or oversimplification of the label. Labeling people with grades is a form of superior-to-subordinate judgment which, if our process pays attention to our content, we can predict will be met with defensiveness. In communication classes, everything is a message; grading systems and attitudes might implicitly undermine some concepts we explicitly teach—trust, dialogue, disclosure—while perversely demonstrating others--objectification, defensive communication, labeling, and stereotyping. We should make it very clear to our students that they are not on trial, that grades operate only as tentative feedback-shorthand, and that grades apply only to perceived levels of learning, not persons.

Thus I tell students that the traditional academic words "examination" and "evaluation" will often take on different dimensions in our class. There will be examinations but no tests. The difference is attitudinal, and crucial. When something is **examined**, it is brought into awareness, its parts are surveyed, its applicability is monitored, it is "tried on for size." An examination of something is a nonthreatening prerequisite to learning from and with it. I ask students to create words on paper and vocally in discussion so that we might examine them together as nonjudgmentally as possible. But a **test** is completely different in its implications and connotations. A test, almost by definition, is a stressful situation—a crisis for the tested. When I "test-drive" a car, I look for defects; when I "test" for a part in a play, I'm being judged in comparison to others and failure is a constant spectre. "Testing," in normal usage, has none of the sense of simple awareness and examination of what-is that is so necessary to personalizing education. Yet often in education we insist on using "test" and "exam" synonymously. We should not be surprised when our students develop the notion they are "C people" if they don't qualify for A's or B's on our tests.



I also seek to use "evaluation" not as a synonym for judgment, but to connote the difficult and frustrating process of distributing value in my life. Evaluation in education is most profitably considered as a double-edged assessment of where value "belongs" for individual students in the area of study. Thus evaluation is imprecise; it should be. Evaluation is imprecise because value is basically affective. Although I might help students by sharing my evaluations in response to their work, they must realize that my responses cannot be digested whole, as pronouncements. I say evaluation is "double-edged assessment" because it provides a student with checks on both inner and outer realities. Self-evaluation is always a component in true education, just as a strong sense of identity is always a component in truly interpersonal communication.

Classroom teachers cannot ignore the communicational aspects of grading. My students taught me that. They also encouraged me to write and share "You Are Not Your Grade: A Message to Students," which I now distribute to each new class I encounter. Though only a brief handout, I find it helpful in starting discussions. Perhaps it will serve that purpose here, too.

A Message to Students

Sometimes I've been so angry at the system of grades, so disappointed at how students and teachers get defensive about grading practices, that I just want to give up. At these times, it seems tantalizing to argue for a totally gradeless education. Intellectually, I believe that approach, even with its dilemmas, is probably preferable to the current ways we warp ourselves and our experience by the constant public evaluation of persons. Maybe someday....But that isn't one of my more realistic hopes.

So I seek to explain to myself and others that grades are potentially valuable as feedback (not as category-boxes or "marks" if we in education are clear and honest in our communication about them. I want to share some of my reactions to the most common system of grading in higher education. The observations apply whether the source of the grade is a teacher, other students, or self.

I consider an "A" grade to indicate extremely high quality

(continued on next page)

insight—literally in-sight, creative and committed; it implies learning which is consistently applicable and transferable to other areas of life.

I consider a "**B**" grade to indicate consistently good in-sight and commitment; it results in building a solid base of learning upon which other learning may be built.

I consider a "**C**" grade to indicate a marginal level of learning, one which is adequate for many purposes to "get by," but difficult to build on or apply. In my experience, "C" learning much more often comes from lack of interest or commitment than from lack of ability.

I consider a "**D**" grade to indicate a level of learning just barely adequate for exposure to an area of study. It is usually signaled by an "empty" feeling and such statements as "I know there's something there to explore but I just don't care,"or "I just don't have a handle on it," or "I just don't have the skills to explore it." Almost no application can be made of "D"-type learning.

I consider an "**E**" or "**F**" grade to indicate that there is no evidence that any exposure to a subject has taken place except on an accidental level. Learning is not systematic or applicable. Typically, in-sight, creativity, and commitment are very low or nonexistent. No use can be made of this state to build on for future learning.

Grades, then, do not attach to people, but to learning levels. More specifically, they attach to learning levels as perceived in a limited context, with limited evidence, by an observer with human limitations of understanding, ego, and motive.

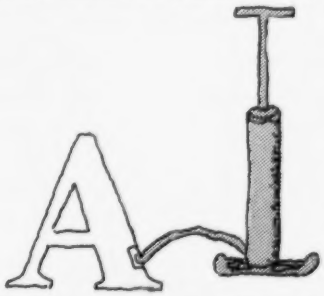
When I lapse into the verbal shorthand of phrases like "you might grade yourself," or "I gave you a grade of...," I am being extremely unfair and inaccurate. I very much want you to know that wherever the grade originates (me, or you, or someone else), **the grade is not you,** and **you are not what is being graded.** People are not gradable. You are not your labels. If grades are to be at all valuable as feedback, we must realize that they apply to levels of learning and behavior-within-a-situation. Not to the person.

Rob Anderson,
Southern Illinois University,
Edwardsville

Stalking the Wild Grade Inflator

The issue of grade inflation has been one haunting college and university administrators for some time. It is a topic often introduced at professional meetings where potential solutions are bandied about, only to be cast aside upon returning to one's home turf. Jim Corder is an administrator at Texas Christian University who, upon returning from a meeting of this type, decided to offer some tentative reasons why the issue appears as it does. In a recent issue of LIBERAL EDUCATION (Vol. 69, No. 2), he mentions four possible sources of grade inflation.

1. Grades have always been arbitrary. The catch is that we have not always known or been willing to say that grades are arbitrary. Students and teachers of the first half of the twentieth century were, he guesses with

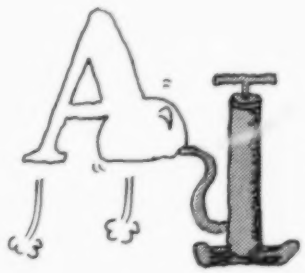


some sureness, less willing than contemporary instructors to call attention to the arbitrariness of grading systems. Once a sufficient number of instructors decide that grading systems are arbitrary, grades in general will go up. They will say, as Robert Frost is reported to have said upon giving no grade below a C, "Life is going to fail some of them; there is no need for me to do it."

2. There has also been a considerable shift in pedagogical attitude during the past fifteen years or so. Corder says that this shift entails replacing the older watchman/guardian of standards/policeman with the newer social worker/editor/-abettor. Fewer teachers are willing to say, "I know precisely what is right, and no one shall pass by me or through my course who does not do things precisely as I have said." That assumes that the truth is already known to the teacher. More teachers now are inclined to say, "There are many ways of approaching what I'm teaching; if you and I work at the problems before you together, I think I can show you

some fruitful ways of bringing your work into good order."

3. Corder also proposes that not enough of us accumulate enough evidence in a semester to be sure that we can justify giving low grades. Put simply, that means that students may not read enough, write enough, or do enough for us to be sure that their work is without merit. Many of us have gradually reduced the number of assignments we make in a given class in a term. Or sometimes, we still give a large number of assignments and set high expectations, but then get busy and do not get around to marking papers assiduously.

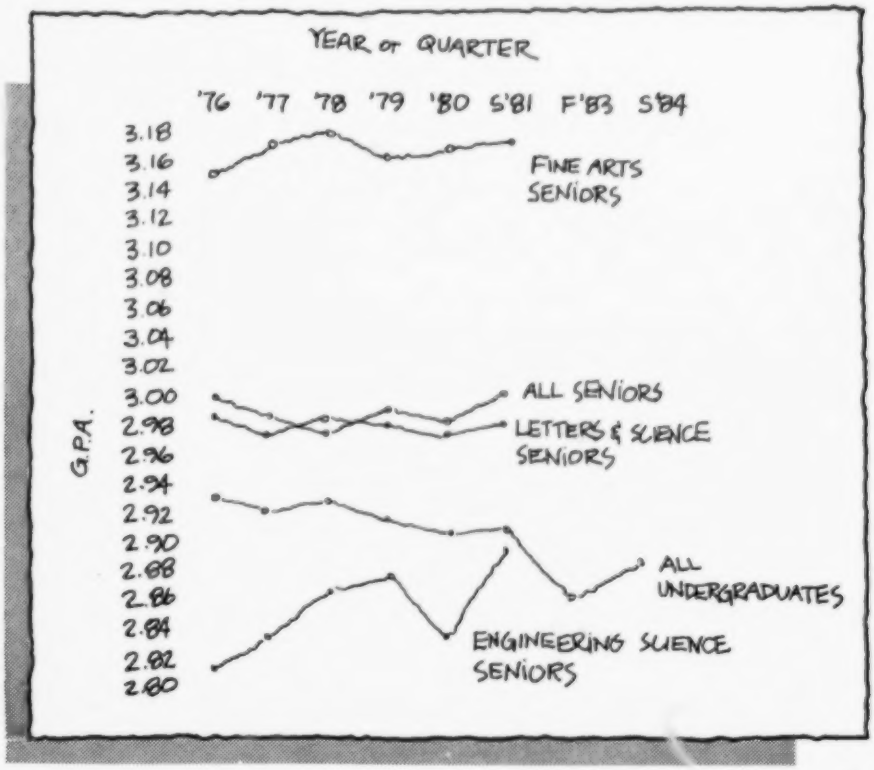


4. Corder does not want us to linger over this last item and hopes he is wrong in introducing it as a source of grade inflation. Some of us are weary and confused and doubt our own earlier beliefs in education and in our own courses. We may no longer know what we are grading when we grade, or why. To the extent that any of this is accurate, then it is not surprising that grades would generally go up.

If there is to be a change, it has to come from changed belief. That is likely to come when we know more—when we understand why we grade as we do, when we know more about how other people grade, when we see what assignments and expectations other teachers set before their students, when we gauge our own practices by the practices of others, and when we have sure evidence about the extent of possible grade inflation.

UCLA GPA Comparisons

How do UCLA undergraduates in the various colleges compare with one another? We have sought to make some superficial comparisons by gathering GPA data for seniors in the colleges of Letters and Science, Engineering, and Fine Arts. In addition, we have sought to include the GPAs for all seniors and all undergraduates for the years 1976-84. Unfortunately the UCLA archives do not include data for all quarters or academic years for this period. What does exist has been submitted for your inspection in the graph below. Various and numerous interpretations may be offered as to why College of Fine Arts seniors have noticeably higher GPAs than undergradeuates in general, or engineering science majors in particular. Similarly, the sharp fluctuations in GPAs over time for undergraduates in general might be explained (or rationalized) in any number of ways. We will leave those matters to you and your imagination.

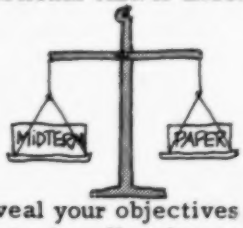


Are You Fair?

Grading can be a struggle for even the most seasoned teacher. Next to the preparation and presentation of instruction, teachers spend more time preparing, administering and interpreting tests than they do in any other teaching activity. For this reason, the teacher should have certain guidelines from which s/he can generate viable and reliable tests. These guidelines provide the basis to answer the question "Are you fair?"

Fairness reflects adherence to certain rules of administration and procedure which are clearly understood by both the teacher and student. These rules are as follows:

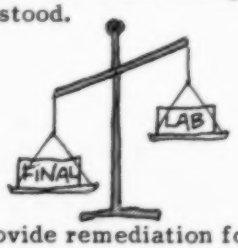
1. Know your goals. Be sure that the objectives of the course are plainly stated, and that they include a reasonable amount of material to be addressed in the course. Identifying the course objective is the first task of the "fair" teacher, and should be mastered before any other instructional task is undertaken.



2. Reveal your objectives to the student. A well-written syllabus or course outline can express to the student the goals and expectations of your course. The teacher should emphasize those goals and requirements at the outset of the class.

3. Learn about test construction. There are many aspects of test construction with which the teacher should be familiar. Is the test norm-referenced or criterion-referenced? How should test items be composed? What proportion of the test is objective or essay? Each of these considerations changes the emphasis of the evaluation.

4. Give students a chance to practice. Before the evaluation, review and preview. Review pertinent information and preview the format in which students will have to perform. It is not "giving it away" to let students know how the test will be constructed. Teaching is not about "making it hard"--teaching is concerned with making it understood.



5. Provide remediation for mistakes. Tests should be learning tools. A solitary letter grade at the top of a paper gives no indication of how the student performed. Written comments, although time-consuming, provide a much more valid learning experience than a grade alone supplies.

6. Allow students to evaluate themselves. If students know the bases for evaluation in the course and are given consistent feedback concerning their progress, they will be more likely to accept a grade as "fair."

Being fair in grading practices is a legitimate goal for any educator, regardless of setting. Good evaluation methods not only make learning more pleasant for the student, but grading becomes an alternative teaching tool for the teacher rather than an unpleasant task.

Cynthia Benton
Teacher Education Graduate
School of Education

How to Lose Friends and Alienate Students

1. Never give students any idea of what their grades are before the final examination. The shock of seeing an F as the final grade will so stun them that they'll be incapable of protest. Or better yet, tell them they had A's all the way through the course and got an A on the final, but you have too many A's, so you're giving them B's.

2. Tell students that you really think they deserved a higher mark, but that you had to conform to department grading policies and hence had to grade them lower.

3. Tell students that their grades on the final exam were higher than their final grades in the course. (Of course they'll understand that the final examination is only one part of the total evaluation.)

4. Even though your university does not record pluses, tell a student that her grade was D+, C+, or B+, rather than a straight D, C, or B. She will gladly accept the fact that the C-, B-, or A- was only three points above her, and will be proud that she did better than anyone else who got a D or C or B.

5. If you make a distribution of total points earned on tests during the term, use large intervals, such as 80 to 90, 90 to 100, etc. When you show a student his position on the distribution, he'll readily see that the person in the next interval above was really much superior.

6. Tell a student that grades are really very arbitrary, and that you could have split the B's from

(continued on next page)

the C's in many different places, and that grades are so unreliable that you really can't distinguish your top B student from your low A student. They will appreciate the aesthetic value of your choice of a cutting point.

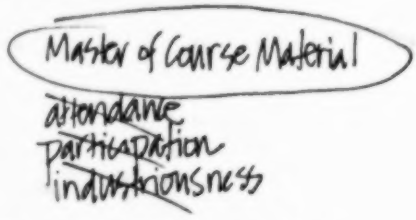
Adapted from Wilbert McKeachie, TEACHING TIPS: A GUIDEBOOK FOR THE BEGINNING COLLEGE TEACHER, 1978.

Grading On A Curve?

UCLA Ombudsman Don Hartsock has found that disputes over the assessment of job performance are among the most common problems with which he deals. This is not surprising since assessment is the life's blood of the university whether it pertains to faculty reviews or, in the case of students, matters of grading. Students and faculty cannot remain where they entered in the university. Growth is not only expected but required. Therefore, it is its measurement which often gives rise to misunderstanding and disputes.

This is where the Ombudsman has begun to raise some basic questions. For example, does the means of assessment really measure students' comprehension of the materials, or simply their ability to "stand on someone else's shoulders?" If you grade on a curve, for example, the people at the top of the class will get A's. However, that does not necessarily mean that these "A" students have complete comprehension of the material. It may simply mean that they understand it better than others in that particular class. Complete mastery of the material is not, according to Hartsock, the primary factor in assigning a grade of "A" when grading on a curve. In his words, "Quite frankly, I would not want someone who has a 60% comprehension of anatomy as my surgeon. I don't care if he or she was top in the class or not. Proficiency and how you measure it is as much an art as how you teach the material. I do not think the art of writing examinations has had as much time and effort devoted to it as mastering the material."

As Ombudsman, Don Hartsock has come across many students who say they did pretty well on the examination, but not well enough when compared with everyone else in the class. They believed their grade too brazenly reflected peer ranking and not mastery of the material. In Hartsock's words, "It is sort of like using the 'sports model' for grading. In baseball you can win your division playing less than .500 ball. That may mean that you are the best in your division, and that you can go ahead and play in the championship or the World Series. However, you may be considered an also-ran when compared with other teams. Because you are in a mediocre division, that gives you an equivalent of an A."



There is a difference in how student performance is assessed and evaluated in a 199 course and others. Students do not compete with others in a 199 and, therefore, may receive a grade ranging from an A to F depending upon their personal mastery of the material.

However, when students are placed together, the grading referent becomes performance in a particular **class** versus performance in the **course** of instruction. Hartsock believes that emphasis on class performance, because it fosters personal competitiveness rather than cooperation, undermines the collegial spirit which should characterize university life.

Hartsock has found TAs often in the middle of conflicts over grades. For example, students who receive grades which displease them may ask to see the examination. Faculty members often refer them to the TAs. When faculty and TA agree on the assessment, there are usually no problems. However, when the TA believes the student deserves one grade and the faculty believes another is more appropriate, problems often arise. Undergraduates often do not understand the dynamics of the university, believing that if TAs do the grading, then those grades should be binding. However, as apprentice personnel, the grades assigned by a TA are subject to approval by the faculty member in charge. When undergraduates seek Hartsock's assistance in having a grade reevaluated, he repeatedly warns them that they may jeopardize their current standing. That is, through reassessment, a grade may conceivably be lowered as well as raised.

Finally, the UCLA Ombudsman believes that there are a number

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of procedures departments could consider regarding maintaining anonymity for students. He believes that essay responses could rather easily be coded so that students' names would not be apparent. Therefore, personalistic responses from graders would be minimized. In this way, students' work would be assessed apart from the person. Of course, there are always those students who believe that their names and personalities may evoke positive responses which partially obscure the deficiencies of their work. These are but a few caveats and suggestions to consider if you are indeed "grading on the curve."

Future Issues

There are currently two issues of The TA at UCLA NEWSLETTER in preparation. These issues will focus on matters of undergraduate education in general for this coming Spring Quarter and Women TAs for the Fall Quarter issue of the 1985-86 academic year. All suggestions, comments, and submissions are appreciated. Articles for submission may range for 50 to 500 words in length and cover the theoretical as well as the practical. If you have suggestions for articles, or are willing to prepare a short piece to be published in either issue, please contact the TA Training office or telephone 825-9269.

In-Process Evaluations

Quick Memos. There is more to grading and the evaluation of student performance than traditional examinations. One good technique for mid-stream evaluation of your performance, the extent to which certain concepts have been communicated, and student progress is to utilize a series of "quick memos." Set aside a few minutes toward the end of class and ask each student to produce a memo to you which answers any one of the following questions: "What do you think of today's session?" "Do you feel you truly understand the subtleties of ___ as explained in class?" "Are you satisfied with the clarity of the subject matter, presentation, or discussion?" Or you might ask them briefly to describe the essential points which were made in class. This procedure provides an immediate way of receiving feedback on your performance, as well as understanding where individual students stand in your course before the next examination.

Discussion. After discussion sections, you might want to have the participants complete a form something like the following:

1. What role(s) did you assume most of the time today?

2. Comment on the helpfulness of your contributions.

3. What problems do you see in the group discussion?

4. What aspect of the discussion section could be strengthened?

5. What do you consider to be the most valuable aspect of today's session?

In this way, you might better understand the dynamics of the class and adjust before some students are left behind, or before others become bored.

Mini-Paper. While it may be a great deal of work for the instructor, it may be valuable to provide a forum for students who discover related issues which are not covered in class. A "mini-paper" would allow them to develop a very brief exposition on a particular topic and bring it to the attention of the instructor and other class members. Of course, you must decide in advance what kind of grade or reward (if any) that a paper of this sort might warrant.

Credits

Our special thanks to the following for their contributions: Rob Anderson of Southern Illinois University, Edwardsville for granting permission to reprint his article; Cynthia Benton from the Graduate School of Education for contributing her thoughts on grading; UCLA Ombudsman Donald Hartsock; and the Registrar's Office for supplying data on grade point averages.

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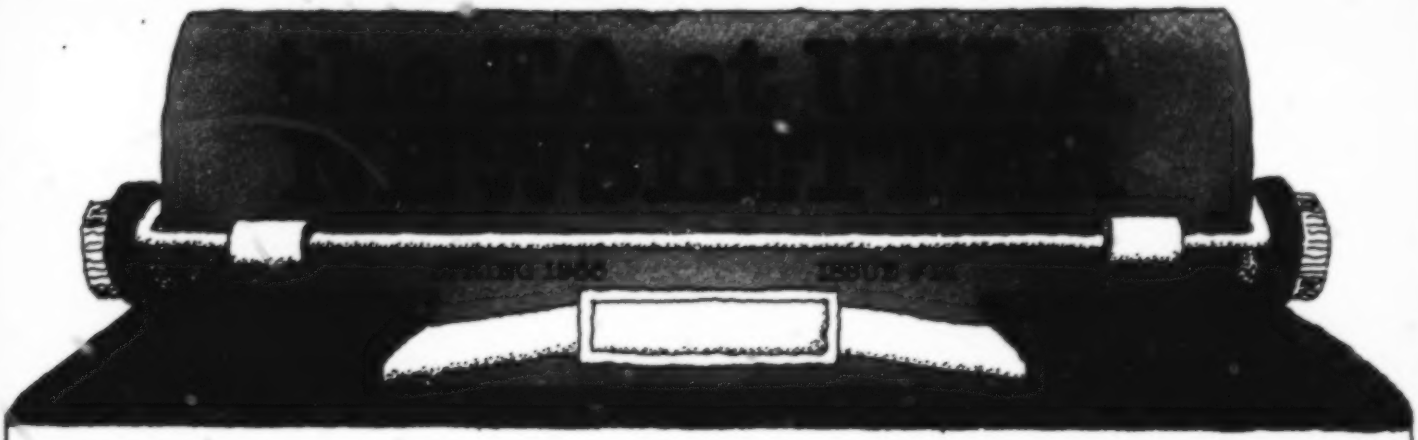

Conspiring Against the Undergraduate

George Bernard Shaw wrote that professions are a conspiracy against the laity. As a relatively recent initiate in the profession of college teaching, I want to comment on the application of Shaw's observation to my new calling (in the spirit of, so to speak, "If the Shaw fits, air it").

If I may assume that undergraduates are the essential laity or clients for my skills, then a confession is in order. I have conspired against them virtually at every turn in my brief professional career. What's more, I have recruited graduate students as co-conspirators, and shared my tactics with fellow faculty members. Administrators do not seem to mind. Apparently the conspiracy runs deep, and my allies are numerous and powerful. My activities are easily concealed in the pedagogic fog of university goals and purposes. Shaw would have berated me as a professional for teaching undergraduates more than I know. Actually, I have found it more convenient to teach them less. I have opted to be popular rather than profound.

I have been assured by older and more experienced hands that faculty have been going underground in this manner for a very long time. I have been told stories of resigned careerism and Worldly Wise reputations in the lineage of the most venerable institutions, of turn-of-the century philosphers resorting to lantern slides, of historians quoting from newspapers. I confess to imitating them all, and more.

In the current configuration of student desires with regard to education, two yearnings stand out ripe for conspiratorial exploitation. One is a wish that learning be relevant, particularly of benefit in earning a living. The other is a want that it be concrete and certain. Both longings merge in a metaphor of education as a solid foundation, a firm structure, although many of the most desired blocks are actually procedural in nature, ordered and precise techniques building up to a presumed practical skill.

Although what I learned in more than a decade as a student does provide me with a fair living, I would be hard-pressed for credibility if I promised that teaching much of what I know would benefit others in a similar way. Only in the best of all worlds could I argue that what I have learned is potentially relevant to all comers. Only a small portion of it will ever be widely accepted as so.

Most discouraging in view of student expectations, little of what I know to teach fits the metaphor of hard, materialized truth. In the classroom I have struggled through comparisons of reality with shadows in a cave, and even more fashionable descriptions of flickering images on a screen. The discontent only swells. Now I keep shadows a secret, and freeze illusions into frames bigger than life. I have resorted to making my undergraduate courses myths within a myth. I teach with the verisimilitude of a textbook, exuding confidence that I am tracing the sure and simple contours of organized knowledge. I count the minutes of every lecture, anxious to return to my office and deal privately with less sterner stuff.

I draw graduate students into my designs with a ritualistic initiation, a ceremonial break with undergraduate life at the beginning of each new seminar class. I reveal opportunities to master an arcane craft of the mind, but only if one accepts the dynamics of academic life as

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in this issue:
UNDER-
GRADUATE
INSTRUCTION

listening to and making arguments, choosing methodologies to argue with like public masks. Certainty must be checked at the classroom door to get down to serious listening and reflecting. But I advise them to practice in undergraduate classrooms as theaters of assuasion.

The incentive for subverting undergraduate education is compelling, particularly for the rising and ambitious faculty member in an institution that is similarly on the academic make. The young professional quickly learns that the institutional yearning for status, much like the professor's own, is directed principally beyond a school's own walls. As a medium of that status, the teaching-scholar is expected to acquire a distant reputation. The larger the number of strangers who know a professor's worth, the better. When the greatest number of people who appreciate professors involves practically no one they personally know, or will ever meet, they are academic celebrities.

In such a calculus for excellence, the intimate campus contact of the classroom becomes problematic. While graduate students may someday be useful for spreading the reputation of the scholarly professional, undergraduates are typically poor conductors of such acclaim. Objectively speaking, they are a professional liability. Not only do undergraduate students demand time, energy and attention more productively directed elsewhere, but their unfulfilled expectations, if voiced or recorded on teacher evaluation sheets, can create administrative difficulties.

There is a logic for conspiracy in this situation difficult to resist. If teaching undergraduates is an institutional necessity, but one that rewards little and risks much, the undeniable recourse of reason is to avoid trouble rather than seek satisfaction. For most students, the solution satisfactorily transposes. By catering to median expectations, the teacher is able to offer more pleasantries rather than make painful demands. Just about everyone is happier when this Benthamite formula is applied.

Beyond the university's general penchant for far-reaching prestige, I can only speculate why its interests seem so compatibly served by this subterfuge. I assume that they are, but not just because institutional rewards weigh in favor of it, or because no one in administrative authority in my particular situation has yet to step forward to discourage me. I suspect that I may be in tacit league with the highest shakers in higher education because so many of the expediencies practiced in running large and complex universities remind me of my own.

As I assign to enduring enrollment numbers the tangible proof of my popularity and of the importance of my courses, so the university turns almost no one away as unsuited or unfit. In my promises of relevant and practical learning is echoed the university's claims and counsel toward career preparation. My bold assertions of revealing truth are just an aside in the oratory of higher education concerning its role in instilling students with expertise.

The crux of my conspiratorial strategy is simply to avoid disturbing the continuity of the undergraduate's educational experience. Abraham Flexner more than fifty years ago observed a tendency of the university to usurp the broader functions of secondary education, to perceive a seamless juncture with the high school and its mandate for acculturation, training, and commonly achieved certification. "Universities that are held to their appropriate tasks will be unfit to do other tasks" he wrote. It is not education's business "to avoid every break, every jolt, every crisis" that students must face. Profound words. But I don't want to be the one to teach them.

Douglas Birkhead
Louisiana State University

Suggestions for Bad Lecturing

1. Begin a course with no introduction to the subject or to your own bias. Simply start with the first topic you wish to present.

2. Make no references to the broader context related to the specific topic being considered.

3. Do not acknowledge the students' interests or previous knowledge and experience.

4. Become preoccupied with the historical context of a topic, neglecting the central subject of the course.

5. Give excessive attention to the trivial details of the subject or to those parts that most interest you; omit topics of more central importance or interest.

(continued on next page)

6. Dwell extensively on your private scholarly quarrels with other authorities over esoteric points without showing how your concerns relate to the larger subject.

7. Qualify terms so excessively that students will not be able to explain them to a friend immediately after class. Be so specific and sophisticated in the definitions you present that students will have to memorize what you say word for word and will be unable to define terms meaningfully in their own language.

8. Present learned quotations without connecting them to the content.

9. Justify conclusions on the basis of tradition or authority without explaining why the authorities believe as they do.

10. Use arcane terms and make no attempt to define them; do not acknowledge that students may not know what you mean.

11. Rarely look at your audience. With a fixed posture, keep your eyes on your notes, the floor, the ceiling, or the side walls.

12. Speak in a monotonous voice, showing little emphasis, force, or enthusiasm.

13. Hesitate frequently in the middle of sentences, but rarely pause at the end of major lecture sections.

14. Show little sense that time is passing and insist on presenting points in the orderly manner you have planned, even if individual classes end in midtopic or you fall far behind the course syllabus.

15. Indicate that you know the students are confused or impatient, but then do nothing differently. □

Kenneth Eble
University of Utah

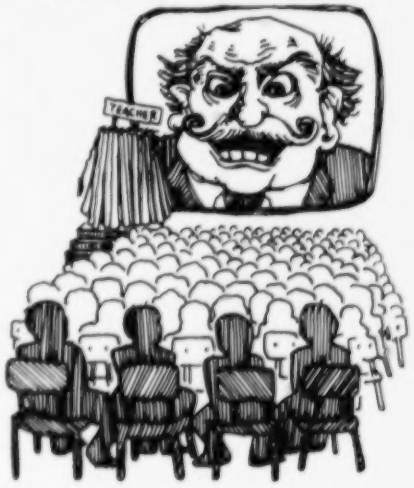
The Quality of Undergraduate Instruction

In late 1984, a panel established by the National Institute of Education published a report which called on colleges and universities to revitalize liberal education and set higher standards for graduation. The report entitled INVOLVEMENT IN LEARNING: REALIZING THE POTENTIAL OF AMERICAN HIGHER EDUCATION noted that "the strains of rapid expansion, followed by recent years of constricting resources and leveling enrollments, have taken their toll." The effect of these pressures has been that the realities of student learning, curricular coherence, the quality of facilities, faculty morale, and academic standards no longer measure up to our collective expectations.

The recommendations and suggestions offered by the panel should be of interest to Teaching Assistants since they are directly responsible for a significant amount of departmental contact with undergraduates. Perhaps even more important are the implications of the report for possible changes in undergraduate teaching styles, teaching assignments for TAs and faculty, and the training of university instructors. Recommendations which should interest TAs are as follows:

Faculty should increase service to first and second year undergraduates. The strategy of "front-loading" is designed to improve student retention by requiring greater student involvement and contact with regular faculty. Their finest instructors should teach classes attracting large numbers of first and second year students, while being given adequate opportunities for intense interaction with instructors. They believe that teaching assistants should be utilized more selectively and better prepared for their instructional responsibilities.

Active modes of teaching require students to take greater responsibility for their learning. While noting that lectures are an essential part of campus life, a mix of teaching styles effectively increase involvement. Students could be involved in faculty research projects through classroom-based exercises or internships, and small discussion groups in large classes can stimulate group involvement.



Learning technologies should increase personal contact between students and faculty. The panel notes that no factor seems to account for student learning and satisfaction with college more than faculty contact. Technology potentially diminishes intellectual contact between faculty and students, and may remove the passion from learning. The current evidence suggests that much current use of computers, programmed instruction, language laboratories, and televised instruction isolate the learner from the instructor and the instructor from the assessment process. Group

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projects that utilize computer technology in bringing together the raw stuff of information for analysis, as well as having students and faculty write programs and software applications together are several ways by which this objective might be met.

The curriculum should emphasize analytical skills, problem solving, communication, synthesis, and the integration of knowledge from various disciplines. That which distinguishes the baccalaureate degree from more specialized credentials is the broad learning that lies behind it. In that direction, interdisciplinary study and the ability to synthesize diverse materials is crucial. The panel stressed the ability to synthesize for three reasons: (1) the evidence strongly suggests that college students have considerable difficulty with abstractions and models that are the grounds of advanced study in the disciplines; (2) the task of integrating knowledge is frequently ignored in favor of analysis; and (3) the ability to synthesize is necessary for the development of judgment and for the application of academic learning to real life situations.

Graduate departments should require evidence of a broad undergraduate education. Liberal arts education is especially important for future college teachers. Good teaching speaks to the variety of knowledge in students' experience. Most graduate students heading for careers in college teaching will wind up in institutions that offer few highly specialized courses. They will be called upon frequently to teach general courses and interdisciplinary or multidisciplinary courses.

Prospective faculty should learn the history and organization of higher education, as well as develop an understanding of teaching and learning. Potential faculty members often do not know much about how universities work and may, consequently, enter teaching with false expectations and be swiftly disillusioned by the realities of organizational life. Noting that their recommendation is purposively phrased in general terms, the panel encourages universities to be creative in the ways they expose future college teachers to the milieu of higher education, learning theories, assessment, and pedagogy. They suggest a teaching internship closely supervised by a senior professor, a series of informal seminars and discussion groups, workshops, and self-paced reading lists.

The challenges to the abilities of graduate teaching assistants in the report are many. TAs as a group were characterized as relatively ill-prepared, lacking in commitment, too narrow in their specializations, unfamiliar with the broad range of liberal arts, and untrained in learning theories and pedagogy. It is up to each TA, faculty, and department to meet these challenges. □

The State of Teaching in The Humanities

Late 1984 brought the publication of another national report which identified serious problems with undergraduate education in American colleges and universities. The report was written by William J. Bennett, then chairman of the National Endowment for the Humanities, who now heads the Department of Education. It is based on the findings of a 31 member panel. Entitled TO RECLAIM A LEGACY, the report notes that the humanities "are a body of knowledge and a means of inquiry that convey serious truths, defensible judgments, and significant ideas." The restoration of the humanities, according to Bennett, will require renewed emphasis on good teaching and curricular coherence.

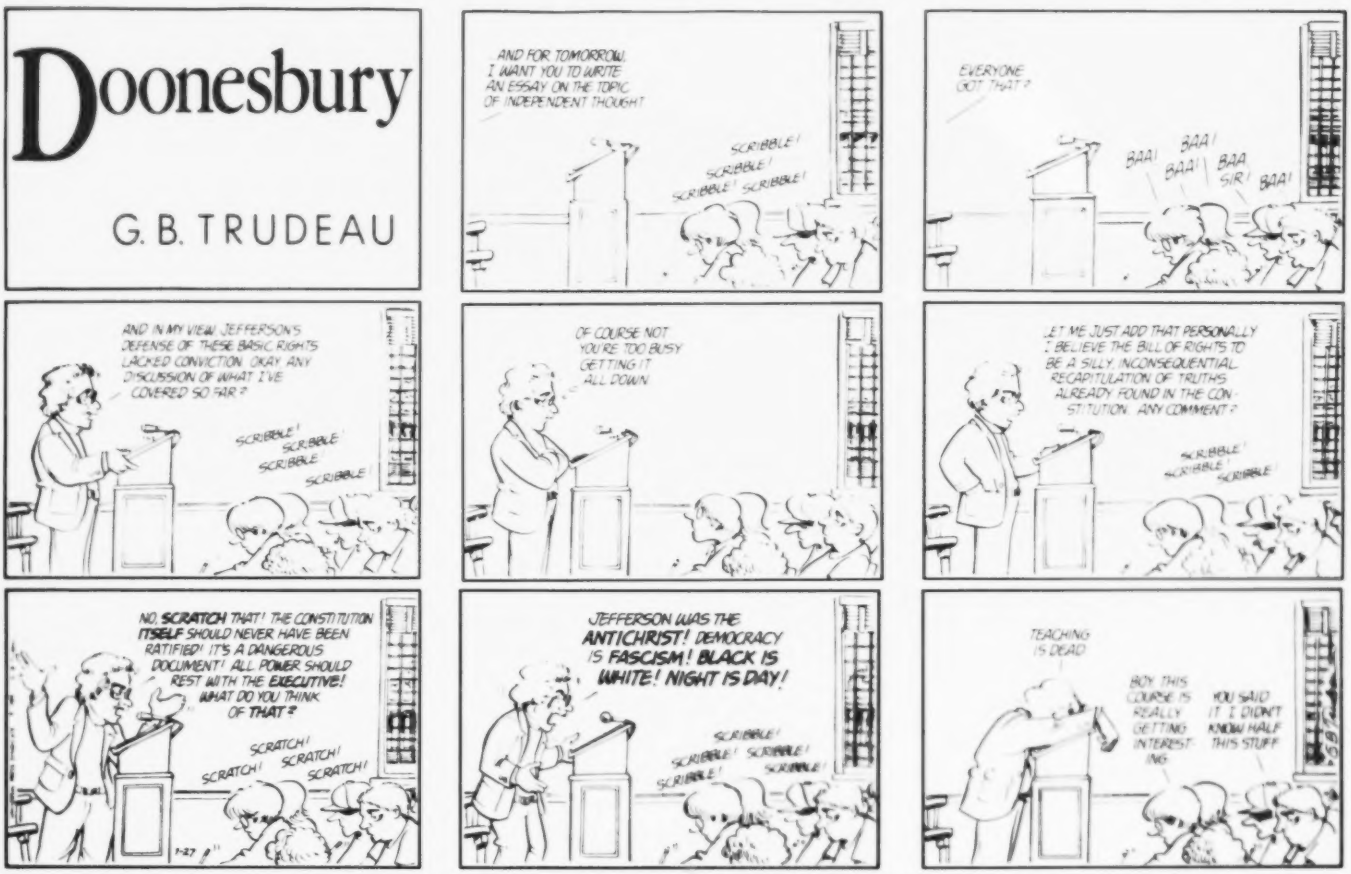
Good teaching in the humanities is essential. The panel pointed out that 87% of all credit hours taken in the humanities are taken in the freshman and sophomore years. Therefore, since most humanities students are non-majors, they should be extended the most attractive invitation to the subject matter possible. This requires good teachers who can make the humanities live and who can guide students through the landscape of human thought. Chairman Bennett noted that the panel's experience in higher education convinced them that the humanities are being taught with uneven success. Some institutions do an outstanding job, some a poor one. At most colleges and universities the subject matter is taught both well and poorly, with inspiration in one classroom, excruciating dullness in another.

The study group also criticized some universities for surrendering the teaching of introductory and lower division courses to graduate assistants or adjunct faculty. The panel noted that extensive use of teaching assistants and adjunct faculty allows the institutions to serve

more students per faculty dollar, but that **as a group** these people are not the best, most experienced, most accomplished, nor most intellectually mature teachers. The report cites University of Chicago Professor Wayne Booth in his 1982 presidential address to the Modern Language Association: "We have chosen to say to the world, almost in so many words, that we do not care who teaches non-majors or under what conditions, so long as the troublesome hordes move on and out, forced in by requirements, forced out by discouragement, or by disgust, or by literal failure. The great public fears or despises us because we hire a vast army of underpaid flunkies to teach the so-called service courses, so that we can gladly teach, in our advanced courses, those precious souls who survive the gauntlet."

In addition, the panel was alarmed by the tendency of some humanities professors to present their subjects in a tendentious, ideological manner. They noted that the humanities are used as if they were the handmaidens of ideology, subordinated to particular prejudices and valued or rejected on the basis of their relation to a certain social stance. At the other extreme, they noted that the humanities are declared to have no inherent meaning because all meaning is subjective and relative to one's own perspective. There is no longer agreement on the value of historical facts, empirical evidence, or even rationality itself. As panel member David Riesman noted, "Some students are captivated by these approaches and think them modern or sophisticated. But the vast majority of students have correctly thought otherwise and have chosen to vote with their feet, stampeding out of the humanities departments. We cannot blame this on an insufficient number of students, or on the quality of students, or even on the career aspirations of students. We must blame ourselves for our failure to protect and transmit a legacy our students deserve to know."

The panel concluded its report with a number of important questions which we all must ask of ourselves, our institutions, our instructors, and our curricula. Are we teaching what we should? Are we teaching it as well as we can? No college or university, they note, will reject such questions out of hand or dismiss them with easy affirmatives or conventional excuses if they are concerned for students and mindful of their responsibilities. □


Doonesbury
G. B. TRUDEAU
AND FOR TOMORROW, I WANT YOU TO WRITE AN ESSAY ON THE TOPIC OF INDEPENDENT THOUGHT
SCRIBBLE! SCRIBBLE! SCRIBBLE! SCRIBBLE!
EVERYONE GOT THAT?
BAA! BAA! BAA! BAA SIR! BAA!
AND IN MY VIEW, JEFFERSON'S DEFENSE OF THESE BASIC RIGHTS LACKED CONVICTION. OKAY, ANY DISCUSSION OF WHAT I'VE COVERED SO FAR?
SCRIBBLE! SCRIBBLE! SCRIBBLE SCRIBBLE
OF COURSE NOT. YOU'RE TOO BUSY GETTING IT ALL DOWN.
LET ME JUST ADD THAT PERSONALLY, I BELIEVE THE BILL OF RIGHTS TO BE A SILLY, INCONSEQUENTIAL RECAPITULATION OF TRUTHS ALREADY FOUND IN THE CONSTITUTION. ANY COMMENT?
SCRIBBLE! SCRIBBLE! SCRIBBLE
NO, SCRATCH THAT! THE CONSTITUTION ITSELF SHOULD NEVER HAVE BEEN RATIFIED! IT'S A DANGEROUS DOCUMENT! ALL POWER SHOULD REST WITH THE EXECUTIVE! WHAT DO YOU THINK OF THAT?
SCRATCH! SCRATCH! SCRATCH! SCRATCH!
JEFFERSON WAS THE ANTICHRIST! DEMOCRACY IS FASCISM! BLACK IS WHITE! NIGHT IS DAY!
SCRIBBLE! SCRIBBLE! SCRIBBLE! SCRIBBLE! SCRIBBLE!
TEACHING IS DEAD
BOY, THIS COURSE IS REALLY GETTING INTERESTING
YOU SAID IT. I DIDN'T KNOW HALF THIS STUFF

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Characteristics of Excellent Teachers

Very little attention has been paid to the quality of teaching on the university level. However, a review of the literature by Margaret L. Ford of the University of North Carolina at Wilmington suggests behaviors which excellent teachers exemplify. The following composite of characteristics is excerpted from her article published in IMPROVING COLLEGE AND UNIVERSITY TEACHING (Vol. 31, No. 3, 1983):

- **Commitment to the profession:** Commitment to the profession is exemplified in the teacher's scholarly activities. Research and publications serve as valid indicators of continuous growth. A commitment to the profession also suggests an ever increasing knowledge of subject area content.
- **Humaneness:** This connotes respect for the personhood of the student. It also suggests a caring attitude and concern for others.
- **The ability to communicate:** The goal of all of us should be to address ideas in a direct and precise fashion so students can understand what is being said.
- **Reason:** This area refers to the decision-making exercised by the instructor. Open-mindedness to information and the ability to process information rationally are important factors.
- **Advising and counseling:** These component areas provide an opportunity for teachers and students to build more substantial interpersonal relationships which can be far-reaching in their effects. Teachers are able to use their knowledge and experiences in counseling and advising students.
- **Time invested in the profession:** For people to become excellent teachers, they must learn the art of effective teaching. Good teachers are not simply born but are indeed shaped and molded by their experiences. Each year teachers grow in the profession and learn techniques which should qualify them as better teachers than they were the previous year.
- **Organization and direction:** The teacher is the organizer and presenter of information to students. Thus, all information should be organized and presented to students in a well planned manner. Also, teachers should be available to offer directives to students for student growth and development.
- **Multicultural person:** These people, as teachers, show no favoritism to students of a particular cultural group. Instead, these teachers are able to view each student singularly. They are also able to view the student's problem from dual perspectives.

- **Quality:** Quality relates to the caliber of the information discussed and the teaching styles used. This area focuses on the range and scope of the specific teacher's knowledge. It also relates to the relevance of the teaching style and the flexibility of the teacher.
- **Substance:** This area indicates the depth and breadth of the teachers' knowledge. Particularly, it addresses teachers' ability to integrate the interdisciplinary aspects of the curriculum into their teaching. □

How Do University Presidents Rate Public Higher Education?

The Chancellor of the State University of New York system, Clifton Wharton, Jr., sent a survey to all presidents of public colleges and universities asking them to reflect upon the performance of their campuses in several areas. The survey was sent to 507 presidents of whom 42% responded. The table below summarizes their perceptions in two basic areas.

	Teaching	
	Undergrad.	Grad.
Excellent	8%	16%
Very Good	47%	47%
Adequate	38%	29%
Disappointing	6%	5%
Poor	1%	2%
No Opinion	0%	1%

	Research	
	Basic	Applied
Excellent	14%	9%
Very Good	39%	38%
Adequate	39%	40%
Disappointing	6%	11%
Poor	1%	2%
No Opinion	1%	0%

People exist for the sake of one another. Teach them, then, or bear with them.

Marcus Aurelius

"Poor teaching can masquerade as good teaching when it invites students to join a club of sophisticated cynics who are witty, abrasive, and sometimes engrossing; many teachers in the humanities parade and glorify their eccentricities, and only on reflection and at some distance does one realize that they are really lifeless."

David Riesman

"It is through the humanities that a civilized society talks to itself about things that matter most."

Charles Frankel

"What can I know? What should I know? What may I hope for? What is man?

Kant defining the essence of the humanities

"To teach without speaking, to benefit without doing--rarely is this achieved in our world."

Tao Te Ching, Chapter 43

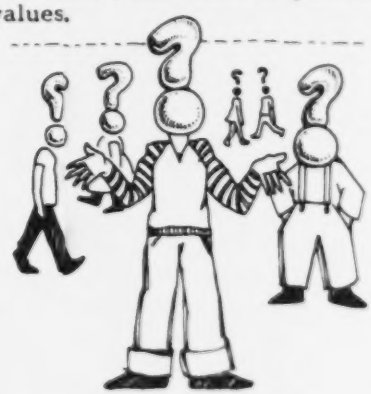
"A pupil should be taught what it means to know something and what it means not to know it; what should be the design and end of study; what valor, temperance, and justice are; the difference between ambition and greed, loyalty and servitude, liberty and license; and the marks of true and solid contentment."

Montaigne

Who Are Today's Freshmen?

In many departments across campus, TAs carry a good deal of the responsibility for teachng lower division courses, their discussion sections, or laboratories. Even though there may be only a five or six year age difference between student and instructor, many TAs have noted how "out of touch" they seem to be with the concerns and life styles of their students. At one level, it is not surprising that TAs and their students would maintain markedly different values, political beliefs, career aspirations, and life styles. The mere fact that people have opted for graduate school and possibly careers in teaching or research signifies that they have made some rather profound decisions which freshmen have not had a chance to make. First and second year college students may have aspirations for careers and life styles which have not been challenged or changed by real world experience.

Effective and interesting undergraduate instruction can be achieved only if instructors know enough about their students to present the course material in an interesting, relevant, and up-to-date manner. Even with subject matter that seems timeless and hopelessly abstract, instructors can effectively discuss its relevance to the undergraduate's present life style, future profession, and social or political values.



The College of Letters and Science has compiled a good deal of information on UCLA freshmen. California residents comprise 95% of incoming freshman, with Los Angeles County contributing 67% of that group. For this group of freshmen in 1984, note that which they feel is "personally important" and "what is likely to happen to them during their collegiate career.

<u>What is Personally Important</u>

1) Be an Authority In My Field 75.6%
2) Be Very Well Off Financially 70.4%
3) Help Others in Difficulty 68.7%
4) Raise A Family 62.4%
5) Develop a Meaningful Philosophy of Life 60.0%
6) Keep Up On Political Affairs 60.0%
7) Gain Recognition From Colleagues In My Field 58.0%

<u>What Is Likely to Happen</u>

1) Get a B.A./B.S. Degree 87.8%
2) Find a Job in Preferred Field 69.7%
3) Be Satisfied With College 66.9%
4) Make At Least a "B" Average 60.1%
5) Fail One or More Courses 1.0%
6) Drop Out Temporarily .6%
7) Drop Out Permanently .3%

"Graduate students chuckle over the best answer to give to any student who asks a question one cannot answer: the best answer, according to one overheard conversation is "We don't know that yet. ""

Margaret M. Gullette

"What enables men to know more than their ancestors is that they start with a knowledge of what their ancestors have already learned. A society can be progressive only if it conserves its tradition."

Walter Lippman

"I feel that a professor or TA should not treat undergraduates as if they were imbeciles."

An anonymous undergraduate

Future Issues

There are currently two issues of The TA at UCLA NEWSLETTER in preparation. These issues will focus on Women TAs and other minorities for the Fall Quarter issue of the 1985-86 academic year. The Winter Quarter issue is tentatively focused on matters of cheating. All suggestions, comments, and submissions are appreciated. Articles and submissions may range from 50 to 500 words in length and cover the theoretical as well as the practical. If you have suggestions for articles, or are willing to prepare a short piece to be published in either issue, please contact the TA Training office or telephone 825-9269.

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For Further Reading

All of the recent national reports on undergraduate students and their education have been summarized or completely reprinted in THE CHRONICLE OF HIGHER EDUCATION. The following is a brief listing of those reports and the issues in which they may be found.

THE AMERICAN FRESHMAN: NATIONAL NORMS FOR FALL 1984. Cooperative Institutional Research Program and the American Council on Education (January 16, 1985)

INTEGRITY IN THE COLLEGE CURRICULUM: A REPORT TO THE ACADEMIC COMMUNITY. Association of American Colleges (February 13, 1985)

INVOLVEMENT IN LEARNING: REALIZING THE POTENTIAL OF AMERICAN HIGHER EDUCATION. National Institute of Education (October 24, 1984)

TO RECLAIM A LEGACY. National Endowment for the Humanities. (November 28, 1984)

Credits

Our thanks to Douglas Birkhead of Louisiana State University for granting permission to reprint his article which appeared in Vol.70, No.3 of LIBERAL EDUCATION. Copyright is held by the Association of American Colleges. We would also like to acknowledge the College of Letters and Science for providing information on UCLA freshmen and Universal Press Syndicate for granting permission to reprint Doonesbury.

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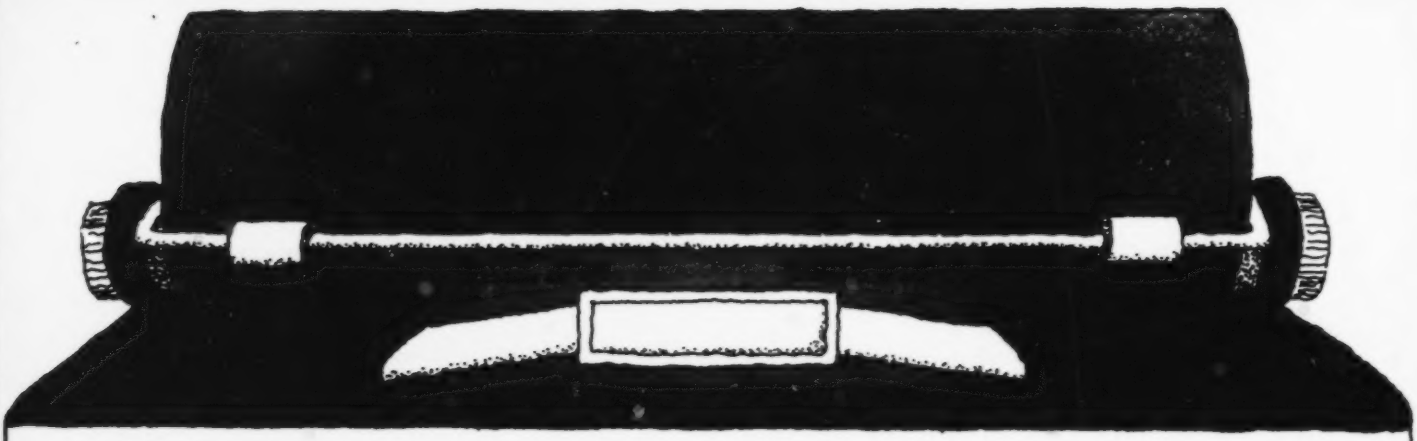


Plagiarism is Alive and Flourishing in the Classroom

Few professors would actively engage in gambling in the classroom. However, I inadvertently became involved in a high-stakes poker game with about 180 students, with startling results. The stakes were the students' grades. My hand held the proof that some of the students had plagiarized their term projects, while their hands held the knowledge of whether they were guilty or innocent.

While I was a doctoral student at a large Southwestern university, my teaching responsibilities included three sections of an introductory junior-level business class. In response to the nationwide complaint by employers that many recent college graduates could not write effectively, all students in the college of business were required to complete a written project of some type for each class. Therefore, consistent with that policy, all of my students were assigned a paper.

Being aware of the possibility of plagiarism, I included in the syllabus the information that plagiarism would result in a grade of F for the course. Such a severe threat, the equivalent of a capital punishment, should be an adequate deterrent, right? Wrong.

The term papers were due about three weeks before the end of the semester, to allow me sufficient time to complete the task of grading some 180 of them. The intent was to return the graded papers to the students before the final exam so that each would know exactly what his or her grade was, going into the final.

After grading a number of papers, I had read two that were outstanding—but familiar. One was an unaltered excerpt from a recent article in a leading professional journal; the other was lifted almost entirely from a prominent weekly business magazine. Unfortunately for the students, I had read both articles.

Now I faced a dilemma. Adherence to my stated policy obviously meant that those students would automatically receive an F for the course, but, because of my benevolent nature, the harshness of the penalty created a conflict within me. After much deliberation, I decided to allow the students the opportunity to rewrite the papers if they had the fortitude to admit their mistake personally and to explain their reasoning. However, allowing them to rewrite the papers for full credit did not seem appropriate. Accordingly, I made the following statement to each of my three classes:

"While grading your papers, I have found two that are clearly plagiarized, which should result in an F. However, since the semester is almost over, I will give the students who plagiarized a chance to salvage the course. If they will stop by my office, admit their mistake, and explain their reasons for plagiarizing, they can write a paper on a different subject and possibly receive a C. Otherwise, the stated policy will be strictly enforced and they will receive an F."

The results were interesting, if not downright shocking. Out of the total 180 students, 13 confessed to plagiarism. Ironically, neither of the two students who had plagiarized the articles I had identified were among the 13—which brought the total to at least 15.

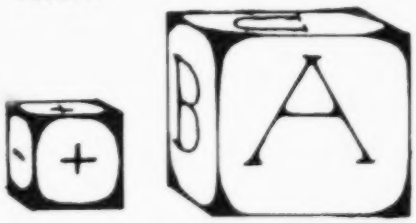
In addition, there were several other students who seemed extremely worried and who asked repeatedly if their papers had been graded yet. I suspect that the extent of the plagiarism fell in the range of 8 to 10 percent of the students, possibly more.

in this issue:
ACADEMIC INTEGRITY

As for the reasons given by those who confessed, they don't hold up.

The principal reason they gave was time pressure—they didn't have enough time to complete an original paper. However, since the papers were assigned on the first day of classes, the time constraint was obviously due to poor planning on the part of the students.

Another was that they couldn't think of a good topic—a poor excuse.



Over all, their plagiarizing had little to do with the hope of raising a low grade. The students who felt compelled to plagiarize were not just the poor performers: Their grades on examinations ranged from A to D.

Plagiarism is alive and flourishing in the classroom, and its extent may be far greater than many faculty members believe. It is time for us to search for the real reasons behind it, to consider ways to prevent it, and, even more important, to convince students that it is not only criminal but self-defeating.

It is also plain that we need to encourage students to take responsibility for planning their time more efficiently, and should give them more practice in thinking creatively. With an imaginative approach to the various aspects of a given problem, and with careful planning, a student should have no shortage of "good" topics or time in which to work out and present an original view.

Earl Naumann
University of Alaska

Preventing Cheating On Exams

When preparing exams and planning exam procedures, try to use methods that will be less likely to encourage cheating. Most students appreciate an instructor's efforts to make the testing situation fair to all. Most cheating on exams is through "wandering eyes," whispering, and "crib sheets." The following list is intended to make you more aware of the potential for cheating on classroom examinations and to suggest methods for preventing it.

1. Tell students right off that cheating will not be tolerated, and that you will enforce university rules on cheating.

2. Try to provide an examination room large enough so that students can sit in every other seat. You can sometimes get another room to spread students out for exams.

3. Use alternate forms of exams with scrambled orders of questions. Color coding the exams is useful for distributing the exams and making sure that they are handed out correctly.

4. Have enough proctors to monitor the exam. Proctors should be stationed around the room throughout the exam. They should be most vigilant at the end of the exam period during the confusion of turning in the exams. Try to maintain order and quiet when exams are collected.

5. To prevent "ringers" (persons hired to take an exam), require identification and student signatures on exams. All students should have photo ID cards. If you plan to check IDs, be sure to note this in your syllabus and warn students before the exam.

6. To foil the "lost exam gambit," require students to sign an attendance sheet when they turn in their exams. Also, count those present at the exam carefully to make sure the number of examinees agrees with the number of exams.

7. All books and notes sould be placed out of sight, not on the seat between students.

8. When exam "blue books" are used, have students turn them in prior to the exam for stamping and random distribution or have students begin on a particular page.

9. You should supply any "scratch paper" that you permit students to use during the exam.

10. If you permit regrading of exams, photocopy exams and quizzes (or at least a sample of them) before they are returned to students to prevent altered answers.

11. Maintain adequate security at all times for exams, grade books, and Grade Rosters. These items should be kept in locked cabinets, desks, or files. Most locked doors are not really secure.

12. Departments should maintain security of exams and materials used in preparing and duplicating exams. There are a and many apocryphal tales about the theft of exams from department offices and trash bins.

Why College Students Cheat

At least five factors can be identified from research literature that have a significant influence on cheating behavior. Each is briefly examined below.

Stress

In a survey of students at Miami University, 69% reported "pressure for good grades from parents, relatives, and the university" as the foremost reason for cheating. Over a 30-year period, many other studies have confirmed the importance of grades as a prime reason for cheating. While many students feel pressured to achieve, faculty often do not recognize the extent of stress under which students labor. In another study, faculty and students were asked to respond to the following statement: "Students are able to keep up with the readings, homework, and lab assignments." Fifty-nine percent of the faculty believed this statement was "very descriptive," but only 29% of the students concurred. On a related question, both groups were asked whether students "always had enough time to finish exams." Nearly half of the faculty believed this was "very descriptive" compared to one third of the student respondents. These findings indicate that students feel academic pressure to a greater extent than faculty may realize.

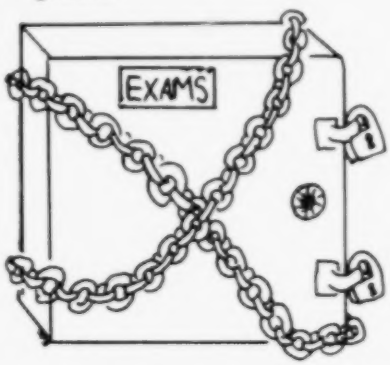
The experience of coping with stress is one reason why students are more lenient in their attitudes toward cheating than are faculty.

Test anxiety has also been associated with cheating. One researcher reported subjects with high levels of test anxiety cheated more than those with low levels. Where there is a high degree of stress, evidence suggests that cheating will be one of the coping mechanisms of many students.

Environment

Several researchers have investigated the relationship of cheating behavior to environmental influences and described six primary conditions under which cheating flourishes. These include:

1. multiple choice exams in large, crowded conditions with an inadequate number of proctors
2. limited secretarial assist ance in preparing multiple forms
3. pervading emphasis on grades



4. use of a limited number of exams
5. opinion among students that "everyone cheats"
6. the absence of apprehension among cheaters

Cheating on college examinations may be a function of "situationally aroused anxiety." Some studies indicate that students cheated more when the professor left the room. Students also cheated more in courses with poor quality teaching by professors. These results may be interpreted in terms of the risk present in cheating. With the professor absent, students may simply make a realistic assessment that detection is a low probability, and therefore cheating is a reasonable risk.

The rate of reported cheating has also been negatively related to the severity of the academic policy of the institution regarding cheating. The high price a student pays for cheating may act as a deterrent. A more feasible explanation, however, may be that cheating is less likely to be reported by faculty when the student faces a high probability of suspension or expulsion.

Peer pressure has been found to be an important part of the environment influencing cheating behavior. An Iowa State study solicited opinions from students about the attitudes of other students toward cheating. The data indicate that most students who were surveyed perceived that their close friends and fraternity brothers or sorority sisters would disapprove only mildly of their cheating. Student apathy about cheating is also reflected in their responses. For example, 83% of the students agreed that students look the other way when they see someone cheating on an exam.

Intelligence

Investigations of the relationship between cheating and academic achievement have found conflicting results. One study found cheaters averaged higher grades than noncheaters, while another found that cheating occurred more often among students with lower grade averages. However, most of the research indicates a strong negative correlation between intelligence and cheating. If the risk of detection is reduced, still others have noted that the relationship between noncheating and IQ is also decreased. The latter finding would suggest the relationship of cheating to IQ depends on the capabilities of the student to

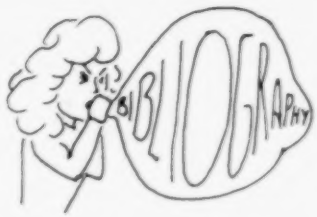
assess the degree of risk involved in cheating at a particular time.

Personality Characteristics

Several studies have been concerned with personality correlates of cheating. Several researchers found college students with a high need for approval (as measured by a social desirability scale) cheated more often. This finding suggests that students with a high need for approval cheat more because they are concerned about negative evaluations if they do poorly. Others have found such students actually cheated less than students who were less concerned about negative evaluation. There are considerable methodological differences among these studies, but all found that, even within the context of an experiment, large numbers of students cheated. Empirical data suggest that there is inconsistent support for the stereotype that sex differences play a role in cheating behavior. Females cheated more than male college students as measured by one procedure, while others found no sex differences among college undergraduates on a task designed to detect cheating.

Definitions of Cheating Behaviors

Cheating is a term typically used to refer to a wide variety of behaviors considered to be unethical. It is a term with broad applications and diverse meaning. There is evidence that some students cheat because they do not understand that particular behaviors constitute cheating, or they refuse to accept common definitions of cheating. Many students seem confused as to what actually constitutes cheating. In the



Iowa State study, faculty and students were asked to rate a number of behaviors as honest or dishonest. Almost all students and faculty agreed that each of the following behaviors constitute cheating: arranging with another student to give or receive answers by signals during an exam; copying from someone's exam paper without his or her knowledge; using unauthorized notes that one has purchased from a commercial research firm; giving answers to other students during an exam; arranging to sit next to someone to copy from his or her paper; and turning in a paper that has been written entirely or in part by another student.

However, less that half (48%) of the students responding believed it is dishonest for students to work together on a homework assignment when the instructor does not allow it. Only 44% of the students feel that it is dishonest to copy a few sentences of material from a source without footnoting it in a paper. Moreover, students disagreed with faculty over the practice of getting questions or answers about an exam from someone who had already taken it. Seventy-eight percent of the faculty believed this act to be dishonest behavior compared to 60% of the students. Approximately the same percentage of students (63%) believed that adding a few items on a bibliography that they did not use in writing the paper was dishonest behavior.

Similarly, there is no consensus among faculty on various kinds of cheating behavior. Some faculty choose to label minor infractions as something other than "cheating." It may be that differing standards of academic integrity among faculty result in mixed and confused messages to students with respect to cheating behaviors. Moreover, it is clear that a majority of students in the study feel that certain practices, such as collaborating with other students, are not dishonest behavior.

It should be pointed out that a negative relationship exists between those acts of cheating that students say occur frequently and those acts that a large percentage of students define as cheating. In other words, the more students feel a particular cheating behavior occurs, the less likely it is that they will view it as academic dishonesty.

David C. Barnett
Jon C. Dalton
Iowa State University

UCLA Policies and Procedures for Handling Cheating

Teaching Assistants should check with supervising faculty regarding their preferred methods of dealing with cheating. The important guidelines for faculty in handling classroom dishonesty are:

a) Deal with cheating directly. Talk with the student. Don't just give a suspected cheater a low grade without comment.

b) A course grade of "F" cannot unilaterally be given for suspected or admitted cheating. A student can only be penalized on that portion of the course work done while cheating.

Classroom dishonesty is formally dealt with by the Dean of Students. If, however, the student admits guilt and agrees on the disposition of the incident, you can handle the misconduct directly after consultation with the Dean of Students. The Ombudsman can serve as consultant or mediator in dealing with suspected cheating.

If the supervising faculty, TA, and student cannot come to an agreement, or if the student is unavailable for inquiry, a grade of "DR" (deferred report) should be issued (governed by Divisional Senate Regulation A-315) which will later be replaced with a final course grade. A letter must be sent to the student, the Dean of Students and the Dean of the School or College in which the course is being taught stating the reasons for assigning the "DR."

Once a "DR" grade has been assigned, the case must be handled by the Dean of Students Office. The supervising faculty should send a letter to the Dean of Students stating the facts of the case. The letter should include the names of all persons having information regarding the incident, e.g., TA, proctor, other students. In addition, copies of the paper or exam in question, and all other revelant documents, should be sent with the letter to the Dean of Students. These copies should be marked to show the specific parts or items alleged to have been copied or plagiarized. At the administrative level, the burden of proof lies with the faculty. All disciplinary cases at UCLA, including those involving cheating, are resolved through a two-track system. All but a handful of the many cheating cases reported annually are resolved when the student confers with a Dean. Usually the student admits guilt and accepts an appropriate penalty. If the student does not admit to being guilty the case proceeds immediately to the more formal track, in which the student's position is heard by the Student Conduct Committee in a public or private hearing.

The Dean of Students will inform you as to the outcome of his investigation. If cheating was in fact determined, "the supervising faculty may replace the grade DR with a final grade that reflects an evaluation of that which may fairly be designated as the student's own achievement in the course as distinguished from any achievement that resulted from plagiarism or cheating." (Divisional Senate Regulation A-306) "The DR shall be changed to a grade, or perhaps to an Incomplete only when the Registrar receives a written request from the instructor which indicates that the student has clarified the situation." (Divisional Senate Regulation A-315) The Dean may also impose additional sanctions such as a reprimand, loss of priveleges, suspension, or dismissal.

The record of a cheating case remains only in the Dean of Students Office and cannot be released to persons outside that office without the permission of the student. The period of time that the penalty stays on the student record varies with the seriousness of the offense. Disciplinary actions of suspension or dismissal are noted on student transcripts.

Term Papers for Sale—And What to Do About It

Term papers have been sold, stolen, and swapped for generations. Students today customarily circulate about campuses spurious documents that collect teachers' grades like passport stamps.

In recent years enterprising agents have openly organized paper mills selling masterminded manuscripts to be passed off as the purchaser's own work. Entrepreneurs of documentary dishonesty now boldly advertise their wares in student newspapers. Titles available for sale number in the thousands.

School administrators and government officials make mammoth efforts to put such purveyors out of business. But legal remedies are time-consuming and costly. And companies suppressed in one part of the country merely go underground and erupt like fungi in other regions.

While relief in court remains as one useful weapon in the fight against fakery, there are other more convenient means of eliminating the problem locally. If professors and secondary instructors really want to ensure that the written evidence of their students' inquiries is genuine, they have at hand several helpful techniques. Any of these simple measures can encourage intellectual integrity and, at the same time, defeat fraudulent suppliers by taking away their market.

1. Allow pupils the greatest possible latitude in their selection of topics to investigate. A useful assumption here is that anyone who is genuinely interested in a subject of study is likely to become immersed in

a personal inquiry and then produce original writing as a result of that interest. Where the list of topics to research is too brief or too narrow, or, even worse, where themes are assigned willy-nilly, pupils are enticed into buying or borrowing someone else's efforts.

2. Establish clear and detailed instructions for the preparation of the manuscripts; then reject any document deviating remarkably from these directions. Pupils are thereby discouraged from purchasing or pirating papers, if such items must be extensively redone.

3. Insist that all preliminary written work be submitted in a folio containing the finished paper as well. This inclusion of bibliographical information, citation cards, rough drafts, note cards, and outlines encourages honesty while entailing no additional preparation by those pupils whose own thoughts are actually represented in their completed papers.

4. Ask each class member to turn in a duplicate copy of the final document. Then compile a master file of these papers to consult when collusion or unfair use of information is suspected.

5. Inform students that a part of an examination late in the course will sample their knowledge of the data they submit in their papers. Once again this strategy will require no special preparation by honest class members, for they already will know what they have learned.

6. Provide assistance appropriate to pupils' needs in conducting their inquiries and their writing. Students who lack essential skills in research are often intimidated by the prospect of preparing a major study. Where students are assured that their instructors are sympathetic and will support them as their work progresses, they are less tempted to resort to manuscripts that have been purchased, purloined, or passed around.

7. Schedule during the term a sufficient number of short, spontaneous, and individual writings to help ascertain the intellectual capabilities of each class member. Any teacher who examines only one monumental project per pupil each semester is in no position to guess whether or not that item is authentic.

8. Plan for an adequate number and variety of projects to be completed during the term. This will keep the importance of a term paper in proper perspective. Students whose grades may stand or fall on the basis of just one enormous undertaking may seek to improve their chances of success by relying on another person's expertise.

9. Identify the specific criteria for the grade given to a paper. Make these expectations so clear that many pupils, given adequate time, support, and motivation, can attain respectable rewards for their labors. Just as there is no limit on learning as such, so, too, there should be no arbitrary quota of grades in any category, as long as students demonstrate appropriate competencies.

10. Guarantee that papers lacking stipulated quality may be revised and resubmitted without penalty for credit toward an improved grade. After all, the purpose of any major study ought to be the learning that springs from the endeavor, not the acquisition of a grade. Since institutions do require minimum grade averages, students are understandably concerned about making good marks. If they are

permitted to work toward mastery of subject matter, with grades in keeping with this mastery, their anxiety ought to be reduced and they should then become more willing to do their own scholarly reports.

11. Present an appropriate ethical model for the people enrolled in the courses. Professors and other teachers who expropriate student-produced materials for their own selfish purposes can only blame themselves if students follow such questionable examples.

Honesty is admittedly a matter of individual pupil commitment. But instructors can do much to create conditions under

which pupils can learn without resorting to underhandedness. It is important to recall, too, that bringing miscreants to face the consequences of their cheating is much more complicated today than it used to be. Even proven culprits are sheltered by cumbersome and complex due process guarantees.

In view of the unhappy consequences mail-order term papers can have on the integrity of students and the academic standards of institutions, there is no good reason for school personnel not to use methods that can so conveniently enhance the quality of scholarly research and the trustworthiness of the scholars.

Hal Malehorn
Eastern Illinois University

"And it is best to err, if err one must, as you have done, upon the side of trust."

Moliere

"I have a wry view of the signs one sees on the highway. Keep right except to pass,' for I realize that many people do just that in life; they do not succumb to temptation to be dishonest as long as there is no temptation."

Ralph Mason Dreger

Future Issues

There are currently two issues of The TA at UCLA NEWSLETTER in preparation. The Winter Quarter issue will be devoted to "Improving Classroom Relationships," while the Spring Quarter issue will focus on "Issues of Sex and Gender." All suggestions, comments, and submissions are appreciated. Articles and submissions may range from 50 to 500 words in length and cover the theoretical as well as the practical. If you have suggestions for articles, or are willing to prepare a short piece to be published in either issue, please contact the TA Training office or telephone 825-9269.

"The only ethical principle which has made science possible is that the truth shall be told all the time. If we do not penalize false statements made in error, we open up the way, don't you see, for false statements by intention. And of course a false statement of fact, made deliberately, is the most serious crime a scientist can commit."

C.P. Snow

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"Trimming: the smoothing of irregularities to make the data look extremely accurate and precise.

Cooking: retaining only those results that fit the theory and discarding others.

Forging: inventing some of all of the research data that are reported, and even reporting experiments to obtain those data that were never performed."

Charles Babbage
(1792-1871)

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